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MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

The Complete Essays

Translated by M. A. SCREECH

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The Death of Mark Antony. From painting by Pompeo Battoni.

THE WORKS OF MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

AN ESSAY BY

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

ILLVSTRATED

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NEW YORK.

The Death of Mark Antony. From painting by Pompeo Battoni.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- The Death Of Mark Antony. From Painting by Pompeo Battoni . . . . Frontispiece
- Thetis. From Painting by Albert Jules Edouard . . . . . Page 64
- Childhood Of Bacchus. From Painting by Joseph-Victor Ranvier . . . Page 142
- The Poet's Dream. From Painting by Jean Leon Gerome . . . . . Page 258

ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE

OF VANITY

THERE IS, peradventure, no more manifest vanity than to write of it so vainly. That which divinity has so divinely expressed to us ought to be carefully and continually meditated by men of understanding. Who does not see that I have taken a road, in which, incessantly and without labor, I shall proceed so long as there shall be ink and paper in the world? I can give no account of my life by my actions; fortune has placed them too low: I must do it by my fancies. And yet I have seen a gentleman who only communicated his life by the workings of his belly: you might see on his premises a show of a row of basins of seven or eight days' standing; it was his study, his discourse; all other talk stank in his nostrils. Here, but not so nauseous, are the excrements of an old mind, sometimes thick, sometimes thin, and always indigested. And when shall I have done representing the continual agitation and mutation of my thoughts, as they come into my head, seeing that Diomedes wrote six thousand books upon the sole subject of grammar. What, then, ought prating to produce, since prattling and the first beginning to speak, stuffed the world with such a horrible load of volumes? So many words for words only. O Pythagoras, why didst not thou allay this tempest? They accused one Galba of old for living idly; he made answer, "That every one ought to give account of his actions, but not of his home." He was mistaken, for justice also takes cognisance of those who glean after the reaper.

But there should be some restraint of law against foolish and impertinent scribblers, as well as against vagabonds and idle persons; which if there were, both I and a hundred others would be banished from the reach of our people. I do not speak this in jest: scribbling seems to be a symptom of a disordered and licentious age. When did we write so much as since our troubles? when the Romans so much, as upon the point of ruin? Besides that, the refining of wits does not make people wiser in a government: this idle employment springs from this, that every one applies himself negligently to the duty of his vocation, and is easily debauched from it. The corruption of the age is made up by the particular contribution of every individual man; some contribute treachery, others injustice, irreligion, tyranny, avarice, cruelty, according to their power; the weaker sort contribute folly, vanity, and idleness; of these I am one. It seems as if it

were the season for vain things, when the hurtful oppress us; in a time when doing ill is common, to do but what signifies nothing is a kind of commendation. ’Tis my comfort, that I shall be one of the last who shall be called in question; and whilst the greater offenders are being brought to account, I shall have leisure to amend: for it would, methinks, be against reason to punish little inconveniences, whilst we are infested with the greater. As the physician Philotimus said to one who presented him his finger to dress, and who he perceived, both by his complexion and his breath, had an ulcer in his lungs: “Friend, it is not now time to play with your nails.”

And yet I saw, some years ago, a person, whose name and memory I have in very great esteem, in the very height of our great disorders, when there was neither law nor justice, nor magistrate who performed his office, no more than there is now, publish I know not what pitiful reformations about cloths, cookery, and law chicanery. Those are amusements wherewith to feed a people that are ill-used, to show that they are not totally forgotten. Those others do the same, who insist upon prohibiting particular ways of speaking, dances, and games, to a people totally abandoned to all sorts of execrable vices. ’Tis no time to bathe and cleanse one’s self, when one is seized by a violent fever; it was for the Spartans alone to fall to combing and curling themselves, when they were just upon the point of running headlong into some extreme danger of their life.

For my part, I have that worse custom, that if my slipper go awry, I let my shirt and my cloak do so too; I scorn to mend myself by halves. When I am in a bad plight, I fasten upon the mischief; I abandon myself through despair; I let myself go towards the precipice, and, as they say, “throw the helve after the hatchet;” I am obstinate in growing worse, and think myself no longer worth my own care; I am either well or ill throughout. ’Tis a favor to me, that the desolation of this kingdom falls out in the desolation of my age: I better suffer that my ill be multiplied, than if my well had been disturbed. The words I utter in mishap are words of anger: my courage sets up its bristles, instead of letting them down; and, contrary to others, I am more devout in good than in evil fortune, according to the precept of Xenophon, if not according to his reason; and am more ready to turn up my eyes to heaven to return thanks, than to crave. I am more solicitous to improve my health, when I am well, than to restore it when I am sick; prosperities are the same discipline and instruction to me that adversities

and rods are to others. As if good fortune were a thing inconsistent with good conscience, men never grow good but in evil-fortune. Good fortune is to me a singular spur to modesty and moderation: an entreaty wins, a threat checks me; favor makes me bend, fear stiffens me.

Amongst human conditions this is common enough: to be better pleased with foreign things than with our own, and to love innovation and change:—

> *"The light of day itself shines more pleasantly upon us because it changes its horses every hour:"*

I have my share. Those who follow the other extreme, of being quite satisfied and pleased with and in themselves, of valuing what they have above all the rest, and of concluding no beauty can be greater than what they see, if they are not wiser than we, are really more happy; I do not envy their wisdom, but their good fortune.

This greedy humor of new and unknown things helps to nourish in me the desire of travel; but a great many more circumstances contribute to it; I am very willing to quit the government of my house. There is, I confess, a kind of convenience in commanding, though it were but in a barn, and in being obeyed by one's people; but 'tis too uniform and languid a pleasure, and is, moreover, of necessity mixed with a thousand vexatious thoughts: one while the poverty and the oppression of your tenants: another, quarrels amongst neighbors: another, the trespasses they make upon you afflict you:—

> *"Or hail-smitten vines and the deceptive farm; now trees damaged by the rains, or years of dearth, now summer's heat burning up the petals, now destructive winters."*

and that God scarce in six months sends a season wherein your bailiff can do his business as he should; but that if it serves the vines, it spoils the meadows:—

> *"Either the scorching sun burns up your fields, or sudden rains or frosts destroy your harvests, or a violent wind carries away all before it;"*

to which may be added the new and neat-made shoe of the man of old, that hurts your foot, and that a stranger does not understand how much it costs you, and what you contribute to maintain that show of order that is seen in your family, and that peradventure you buy too dear.

I came late to the government of a house: they whom nature sent into the world before me long eased me of that trouble; so that I had already taken another bent more suitable to my humor. Yet, for so much as I have seen, ’tis an employment more troublesome than hard; whoever is capable of anything else, will easily do this. Had I a mind to be rich, that way would seem too long; I had served my kings, a more profitable traffic than any other. Since I pretend to nothing but the reputation of having got nothing or dissipated nothing, conformably to the rest of my life, improper either to do good or ill of any moment, and that I only desire to pass on, I can do it, thanks be to God, without any great endeavor. At the worst, evermore prevent poverty by lessening your expense; ’tis that which I make my great concern, and doubt not but to do it before I shall be compelled. As to the rest, I have sufficiently settled my thoughts to live upon less than I have, and live contentedly:—

> *“ ’Tis not by the value of possessions, but by our daily subsistence and tillage, that our riches are truly estimated.”*

My real need does not so wholly take up all I have, that Fortune has not whereon to fasten her teeth without biting to the quick. My presence, heedless and ignorant as it is, does me great service in my domestic affairs; I employ myself in them, but it goes against the hair, finding that I have this in my house, that though I burn my candle at one end by myself, the other is not spared.

Journeys do me no harm but only by their expense, which is great, and more than I am well able to bear, being always wont to travel with not only a necessary, but a handsome equipage; I must make them so much shorter and fewer; I spend therein but the froth, and what I have reserved for such uses, delaying and deferring my motion till that be ready. I will not that the pleasure of going abroad spoil the pleasure of being retired at home; on the contrary, I intend they shall nourish and favor one another. Fortune has assisted me in this, that since my principal profession in this life was to live at ease, and rather idly than busily, she has deprived me of the necessity of growing rich to provide for the multitude of my heirs. If there be not enough for one, of that whereof I had so plentifully enough, at his peril be it: his imprudence will not deserve that I should wish him any more. And every one, according to the example of Phocion, provides sufficiently for his children who so provides for them as to leave them as much as was left him. I should by no means like Crates’ way. He left his money in the hands

of a banker with this condition—"That if his children were fools, he should then give it to them; if wise, he should then distribute it to the most foolish of the people;" as if fools, for being less capable of living without riches, were more capable of using them.

At all events, the damage occasioned by my absence seems not to deserve, so long as I am able to support it, that I should waive the occasions of diverting myself by that troublesome assistance.

There is always something that goes amiss. The affairs, one while of one house, and then of another, tear you to pieces; you pry into everything too near; your perspicacity hurts you here, as well as in other things. I steal away from occasions of vexing myself, and turn from the knowledge of things that go amiss; and yet I cannot so order it, but that every hour I jostle against something or other that displeases me; and the tricks that they most conceal from me, are those that I the soonest come to know; some there are that, not to make matters worse, a man must himself help to conceal. Vain vexations; vain sometimes, but always vexations. The smallest and slightest impediments are the most piercing: and as little letters most tire the eyes, so do little affairs most disturb us. The rout of little ills more offend than one, how great soever. By how much domestic thorns are numerous and slight, by so much they prick deeper and without warning, easily surprising us when least we suspect them. Now Homer shows us clearly enough how surprise gives the advantage; who represents Ulysses weeping at the death of his dog, and not weeping at the tears of his mother; the first accident, trivial as it was, got the better of him, coming upon him quite unexpectedly; he sustained the second, though more potent, because he was prepared for it. 'Tis light occasions that humble our lives. I am no philosopher; evils oppress me according to their weight, and they weigh as much according to the form as the matter, and very often more. If I have therein more perspicacity than the vulgar, I have also more patience; in short, they weigh with me, if they do not hurt me. Life is a tender thing, and easily molested. Since my age has made me grow more pensive and morose:—

> *"For no man resists himself when he has begun to be driven forward,"*

for the most trivial cause imaginable, I irritate that humor, which afterwards nourishes and exasperates itself of its own motion; attracting and heaping up matter upon matter whereon to feed:—

> *"The fall of the drop hollows out a stone:"*

these continual tricklings consume and ulcerate me. Ordinary inconveniences are never light; they are continual and inseparable, especially when they spring from the members of a family, continual and inseparable. When I consider my affairs at distance and in gross, I find, because perhaps my memory is none of the best, that they have gone on hitherto improving beyond my reason or expectation; my revenue seems greater than it is; its prosperity betrays me: but when I pry more narrowly into the business, and see how all things go:—

"Indeed we lead the mind into all sorts of cares;"

I have a thousand things to desire and to fear. To give them quite over, is very easy for me to do: but to look after them without trouble, is very hard. 'Tis a miserable thing to be in a place where everything you see employs and concerns you; and I fancy that I more cheerfully enjoy the pleasures of another man's house, and with greater and a purer relish, than those of my own. Diogenes answered according to my humor him who asked him what sort of wine he liked the best: "That of another," said he.

My father took a delight in building at Montaigne, where he was born; and in all the government of domestic affairs I love to follow his example and rules, and I shall engage those who are to succeed me, as much as in me lies, to do the same. Could I do better for him, I would; and am proud that his will is still performing and acting by me. God forbid that in my hands I should ever suffer any image of life, that I am able to render to so good a father, to fail. And wherever I have taken in hand to strengthen some old foundations of walls, and to repair some ruinous buildings, in earnest I have done it more out of respect to his design, than my own satisfaction; and am angry at myself that I have not proceeded further to finish the beginnings he left in his house, and so much the more because I am very likely to be the last possessor of my race, and to give the last hand to it. For, as to my own particular application, neither the pleasure of building, which they say is so bewitching, nor hunting, nor gardens, nor the other pleasures of a retired life, can much amuse me. And 'tis what I am angry at myself for, as I am for all other opinions that are incommodious to me; which I would not so much care to have vigorous and learned, as I would have them easy and convenient for life; they are true and sound enough, if they are useful and pleasing. Such as hear me declare my ignorance in husbandry, whisper in my ear that it is disdain, and that I neglect to know its instruments, its seasons, its order, how they dress my vines, how they graft, and to know the

names and forms of herbs and fruits, and the preparing the meat on which I live, the names and prices of the stuffs I wear, because, say they, I have set my heart upon some higher knowledge; they kill me in saying so. It is not disdain; it is folly, and rather stupidity than glory; I had rather be a good horseman than a good logician:—

"Dost thou not rather do something which is required, and make osier and reed basket."

We occupy our thoughts about the general, and about universal causes and conducts, which will very well carry on themselves without our care; and leave our own business at random, and Michael much more our concern than man. Now I am, indeed, for the most part at home; but I would be better pleased than any where else:—

"Let my old age have a fixed seat; let there be a limit to fatigues from the sea, journeys, warfare."

I know not whether or no I shall bring it about. I could wish that, instead of some other member of his succession, my father had resigned to me the passionate affection he had in his old age to his household affairs; he was happy in that he could accommodate his desires to his fortune, and satisfy himself with what he had; political philosophy may to much purpose condemn the meanness and sterility of my employment, if I can once come to relish it, as he did. I am of opinion that the most honorable calling is to serve the public, and to be useful to many:—

"For the greatest enjoyment of evil and virtue, and of all excellence, is experienced when they are conferred on some one nearest:"

for myself, I disclaim it; partly out of conscience (for where I see the weight that lies upon such employments, I perceive also the little means I have to supply it; and Plato, a master in all political government himself, nevertheless took care to abstain from it), and partly out of cowardice. I content myself with enjoying the world without bustle; only to live an excusable life, and such as may neither be a burden to myself nor to any other.

Never did any man more fully and feebly suffer himself to be governed by a third person than I should do, had I any one to whom to entrust myself. One of my wishes at this time should be, to have a son-in-law that knew handsomely how to cherish my old age, and to rock it asleep; into whose hands I might deposit, in full sovereignty, the management and use of all

my goods, that he might dispose of them as I do, and get by them what I get, provided that he on his part were truly acknowledging, and a friend. But we live in a world where loyalty of one's own children is unknown.

He who has the charge of my purse in my travels, has it purely and without control; he could cheat me thoroughly, if he came to reckoning; and, if he is not a devil, I oblige him to deal faithfully with me by so entire a trust:—

> *"Many have taught others to deceive, while they fear to be deceived, and, by suspecting them, have given them a title to do ill."*

The most common security I take of my people is ignorance; I never presume any to be vicious till I have first found them so; and repose the most confidence in the younger sort, that I think are least spoiled by ill example. I had rather be told at two months' end that I have spent four hundred crowns, than to have my ears battered every night with three, five, seven: and I have been, in this way, as little robbed as another. It is true, I am willing enough not to see it; I, in some sort, purposely, harbor a kind of perplexed, uncertain knowledge of my money: up to a certain point, I am content to doubt. One must leave a little room for the infidelity or indiscretion of a servant; if you have left enough, in gross, to do your business, let the overplus of Fortune's liberality run a little more freely at her mercy; 'tis the gleaner's portion. After all, I do not so much value the fidelity of my people as I contemn their injury. What a mean and ridiculous thing it is for a man to study his money, to delight in handling and telling it over and over again! 'Tis by this avarice makes its approaches.

In eighteen years that I have had my estate in my own hands, I could never prevail with myself either to read over my deeds or examine my principal affairs, which ought, of necessity, to pass under my knowledge and inspection. 'Tis not a philosophical disdain of worldly and transitory things; my taste is not purified to that degree, and I value them at as great a rate, at least, as they are worth; but 'tis, in truth, an inexcusable and childish laziness and negligence. What would I not rather do than read a contract? or than, as a slave to my own business, tumble over these dusty writings? or, which is worse, those of another man, as so many do nowadays, to get money? I grudge nothing but care and trouble, and endeavor nothing so much as to be careless and at ease. I had been much fitter, I believe, could it have been without obligation and servitude, to have lived upon another man's fortune than my own: and, indeed, I do not know, when I examine it

nearer, whether, according to my humor, what I have to suffer from my affairs and servants, has not in it something more abject, troublesome, and tormenting than there would be in serving a man better born than myself, who would govern me with a gentle rein, and a little at my own ease:—

"Servitude is the obedience of a subdued and abject mind, wanting its own free will."

Crates did worse, who threw himself into the liberty of poverty, only to rid himself of the inconveniences and cares of his house. This is what I would not do; I hate poverty equally with pain; but I could be content to change the kind of life I live for another that was humbler and less chargeable.

When absent from home, I divest myself of all these thoughts, and should be less concerned for the ruin of a tower, than I am, when present, at the fall of a tile. My mind is easily composed at distance, but suffers as much as that of the meanest peasant when I am at home; the reins of my bridle being wrongly put on, or a strap flapping against my leg, will keep me out of humor a day together. I raise my courage well enough against inconveniences: my eyes I cannot:—

"The senses, O ye gods, the senses."

I am at home responsible for whatever goes amiss. Few masters (I speak of those of medium condition such as mine), and if there be any such, they are more happy, can rely so much upon another, but that the greatest part of the burden will lie upon their own shoulders. This takes much from my grace in entertaining visitors, so that I have, peradventure, detained some rather out of expectation of a good dinner, than by my own behavior; and lose much of the pleasure I ought to reap at my own house from the visitation and assembling of my friends. The most ridiculous carriage of a gentleman in his own house, is to see him bustling about the business of the place, whispering one servant, and looking an angry look at another: it ought insensibly to slide along, and to represent an ordinary current; and I think it unhandsome to talk much to our guests of their entertainment, whether by way of bragging or excuse. I love order and cleanliness:—

"The dishes and the glasses show me my own reflection,"

more than abundance; and at home have an exact regard to necessity, little to outward show. If a footman falls to cuffs at another man's house, or stumble and throw a dish before him as he is carrying it up, you only laugh and make a jest on't; you sleep whilst the master of the house is arranging a

bill of fare with his steward for your morrow's entertainment. I speak according as I do myself; quite appreciating, nevertheless, good husbandry in general, and how pleasant quiet and prosperous household management, carried regularly on, is to some natures; and not wishing to fasten my own errors and inconveniences to the thing, nor to give Plato the lie, who looks upon it as the most pleasant employment to every one to do his particular affairs without wrong to another.

When I travel I have nothing to care for but myself, and the laying out my money; which is disposed of by one single precept; in spending, I understand a little, and how to give some show to my expense, which is indeed its principal use; but I rely too ambitiously upon it, which renders it unequal and difform, and, moreover, immoderate in both the one and the other aspect; if it make a show, if it serve the turn, I indiscreetly let it run; and as indiscreetly tie up my purse-strings, if it does not shine, and does not please me. Whatever it be, whether art or nature, that imprints in us the condition of living by reference to others, it does us much more harm than good; we deprive ourselves of our own utilities, to accommodate appearances to the common opinion: we care not so much what our being is, as to us and in reality, as what it is to the public observation. Even the properties of the mind, and wisdom itself, seem fruitless to us, if only enjoyed by ourselves, and if it produce not itself to the view and approbation of others. There is a sort of men whose gold runs in streams underground imperceptibly; others expose it all in plates and branches; so that to the one a liard is worth a crown, and to the others the inverse: the world esteeming its use and value, according to the show. All over-nice solicitude about riches smells of avarice: even the very disposing of it, with a too systematic and artificial liberality, is not worth a painful superintendence and solicitude: he, that will order his expense to just so much, makes it too pinched and narrow. The keeping or spending are, of themselves, indifferent things, and receive no color of good or ill, but according to the application of the will.

The other cause that tempts me out to these journeys is, inaptitude for the present manners in our state. I could easily console myself for this corruption in regard to the public interest:—

> *"And, worse than the iron ages, for whose crimes there is no name, and which have no similitude in any of Nature's metals;"*

but not to my own. I am, in particular, too much oppressed by them: for, in my neighborhood, we are, of late, by the long license of our civil wars, grown old in so riotous a form of state:—

"Where wrong and right have changed places,"

that in earnest, 'tis a wonder how it can subsist:—

"Men plough, girt with arms; ever delighting in fresh robberies, and living by rapine."

In fine, I see by our example, that the society of men is maintained and held together, at what price soever; in what condition soever they are placed, they still close and stick together, both moving and in heaps; as ill united bodies, that, shuffled together without order, find of themselves a means to unite and settle, often better than they could have been disposed by art. King Philip mustered up a rabble of the most wicked and incorrigible rascals he could pick out, and put them all together into a city he had caused to be built for that purpose, which bore their name: I believe that they, even from vices themselves, erected a government amongst them, and a commodious and just society. I see, not one action, or three, or a hundred, but manners, in common and received use, so ferocious, especially in inhumanity and treachery, which are to me the worst of all vices, that I have not the heart to think of them without horror; and almost as much admire as I detest them: the exercise of these signal villainies carries with it as great signs of vigor and force of soul, as of error and disorder. Necessity reconciles and brings men together; and this accidental connection afterwards forms itself into laws: for there have been such, as savage as any human opinion could conceive, who, nevertheless, have maintained their body with as much health and length of life as any Plato or Aristotle could invent. And certainly, all these descriptions of polities, feigned by art, are found to be ridiculous and unfit to be put in practice.

These great and tedious debates about the best form of society, and the most commodious rules to bind us, are debates only proper for the exercise of our wits; as in the arts there are several subjects which have their being in agitation and controversy, and have no life but there. Such an idea of government might be of some value in a new world; but we take a world already made, and formed to certain customs; we do not beget it, as Pyrrha or Cadmus did. By what means soever we may have the privilege to redress and reform it anew, we can hardly writhe it from its wonted bent, but we shall break all. Solon being asked whether he had established the best laws

he could for the Athenians; “Yes,” said he, “of those they would have received.” Varro excuses himself after the same manner: “that if he were to begin to write of religion, he would say what he believed; but seeing it was already received, he would write rather according to use than nature.”

Not according to opinion, but in truth and reality, the best and most excellent government for every nation is that under which it is maintained: its form and essential convenience depend upon custom. We are apt to be displeased at the present condition; but I, nevertheless, maintain that to desire command in a few in a republic, or another sort of government in monarchy than that already established, is both vice and folly:—

> *“Love the government, such as you see it to be. If it be royal, love royalty; if it is a republic of any sort, still love it; for God himself created thee therein.”*

So wrote the good Monsieur de Pibrac, whom we have lately lost, a man of so excellent a wit, such sound opinions, and such gentle manners. This loss, and that at the same time we have had of Monsieur de Foix, are of so great importance to the crown, that I do not know whether there is another couple in France worthy to supply the places of these two Gascons in sincerity and wisdom in the council of our kings. They were both variously great men, and certainly, according to the age, rare and great, each of them in his kind: but what destiny was it that placed them in these times, men so remote from and so disproportioned to our corruption and intestine tumults?

Nothing presses so hard upon a state as innovation: change only gives form to injustice and tyranny. When any piece is loosened, it may be proper to stay it; one may take care that the alteration and corruption natural to all things do not carry us too far from our beginnings and principles: but to undertake to found so great a mass anew, and to change the foundations of so vast a building, is for them to do, who to make clean, efface; who reform particular defects by an universal confusion, and cure diseases by death:—

> *“Not so desirous of changing as of overthrowing things.”*

The world is unapt to be cured; and so impatient of anything that presses it, that it thinks of nothing but disengaging itself at what price soever. We see by a thousand examples, that it ordinarily cures itself to its cost. The discharge of a present evil is no cure, if there be not a general amendment of condition. The surgeon’s end is not only to cut away the dead flesh; that is but the progress of his cure; he has a care, over and above, to

fill up the wound with better and more natural flesh, and to restore the member to its due state. Whoever only proposes to himself to remove that which offends him, falls short: for good does not necessarily succeed evil; another evil may succeed, and a worse, as it happened to Caesar's murderers, who brought the republic to such a pass, that they had reason to repent the meddling with the matter. The same has since happened to several others, even down to our own times: the French, my contemporaries, know it well enough. All great mutations shake and disorder a state.

Whoever would look direct at a cure, and well consider of it before he began, would be very willing to withdraw his hands from meddling in it. Pacuvius Calavius corrected the vice of this proceeding by a notable example. His fellow-citizens were in mutiny against their magistrates; he being a man of great authority in the city of Capua, found means one day to shut up the Senators in the palace; and calling the people together in the market-place, there told them that the day was now come wherein at full liberty they might revenge themselves on the tyrants by whom they had been so long oppressed, and whom he had now, all alone and unarmed, at his mercy. He then advised that they should call these out, one by one, by lot, and should individually determine as to each, causing whatever should be decreed to be immediately executed; with this proviso, that they should, at the same time, depute some honest man in the place of him who was condemned, to the end there might be no vacancy in the Senate. They had no sooner heard the name of one senator but a great cry of universal dislike was raised up against him. "I see," says Pacuvius, "that we must put him out; he is a wicked fellow; let us look out a good one in his room." Immediately there was a profound silence, every one being at a stand whom to choose. But one, more impudent than the rest, having named his man, there arose yet a greater consent of voices against him, a hundred imperfections being laid to his charge, and as many just reasons why he should not stand. These contradictory humors growing hot, it fared worse with the second senator and the third, there being as much disagreement in the election of the new, as consent in the putting out of the old. In the end, growing weary of this bustle to no purpose, they began, some one way and some another, to steal out of the assembly: every one carrying back this resolution in his mind, that the oldest and best known evil was ever more supportable than one that was new and untried.

Seeing how miserably we are agitated (for what have we not done!)—

"Alas! our crimes and our fratricides are a shame to us! What crime does this bad age shrink from? What wickedness have we left undone? What youth is restrained from evil by the fear of the gods? What altar is spared?"

I am not going precipitately to resolve:—

"If the goddess Salus herself wish to save this family, she absolutely cannot;"

we are not, peradventure, at our last term. The conservation of states is a thing that, in all likelihood, surpasses our understanding; a civil government is, as Plato says, a mighty and puissant thing, and hard to be dissolved; it often continues against mortal and intestine diseases, against the injury of unjust laws, against tyranny, the corruption and ignorance of magistrates, the license and sedition of the people. In all our fortunes, we compare ourselves to what is above us, and still look towards those who are better: but let us measure ourselves with what is below us: there is no condition so miserable wherein a man may not find a thousand examples that will administer consolation. 'Tis our vice that we more unwillingly look upon what is above, than willingly upon what is below; and Solon was used to say, that "whoever would make a heap of all the ills together, there is no one who would not rather choose to bear away the ills he has than to come to an equal division with all other men from that heap, and take his share." Our government is, indeed, very sick, but there have been others more sick without dying. The gods play at ball with us and bandy us every way:—

"Enimvero Dii nos homines quasi pilas habent."

The stars fatally destined the state of Rome for an example of what they could do in this kind: in it are comprised all the forms and adventures that concern a state: all that order or disorder, good or evil fortune, can do. Who, then, can despair of his condition, seeing the shocks and commotions wherewith Rome was tumbled and tossed, and yet withstood them all? If the extent of dominion be the health of a state (which I by no means think it is, and Isocrates pleases me when he instructs Nicocles not to envy princes who have large dominions, but those who know how to preserve those which have fallen into their hands), that of Rome was never so sound, as when it was most sick. The worst of her forms was the most fortunate; one can hardly discern any image of government under the first emperors; it is

the most horrible and tumultuous confusion that can be imagined; it endured it, notwithstanding, and therein continued, preserving not a monarchy limited within its own bounds, but so many nations so differing, so remote, so disaffected, so confusedly commanded, and so unjustly conquered:—

"Fortune never gave it to any nation to satisfy its hatred against the people, masters of the seas and of the earth."

Everything that totters does not fall. The contexture of so great a body holds by more nails than one; it holds even by its antiquity, like old buildings, from which the foundations are worn away by time, without rough-cast or mortar, which yet live and support themselves by their own weight:—

"Nec jam validis radicibus haerens, Pondere tuta suo est."

Moreover, it is not rightly to go to work, to examine only the flank and the foss, to judge of the security of a place; we must observe which way approaches can be made to it, and in what condition the assailant is: few vessels sink with their own weight, and without some exterior violence. Now, let us everyway cast our eyes; everything about us totters; in all the great states, both of Christendom and elsewhere, that are known to us, if you will but look, you will there see evident menace of alteration and ruin:—

"They all share in the mischief; the tempest rages everywhere."

Astrologers may very well, as they do, warn us of great revolutions and imminent mutations: their prophecies are present and palpable, they need not go to heaven to foretell this. There is not only consolation to be extracted from this universal combination of ills and menaces, but, moreover, some hopes of the continuation of our state, forasmuch as, naturally, nothing falls where all falls: universal sickness is particular health: conformity is antagonistic to dissolution. For my part, I despair not, and fancy that I discover ways to save us:—

"The deity will perchance by a favorable turn restore us to our former position."

Who knows but that God will have it happen, as in human bodies that purge and restore themselves to a better state by long and grievous maladies, which render them more entire and perfect health than that they took from them? That which weighs the most with me is, that in reckoning the symptoms of our ill, I see as many natural ones, and that Heaven sends

us, and properly its own, as of those that our disorder and human imprudence contribute to it. The very stars seem to declare that we have already continued long enough, and beyond the ordinary term. This also afflicts me, that the mischief which nearest threatens us, is not an alteration in the entire and solid mass, but its dissipation and divulsion, which is the most extreme of our fears.

I, moreover, fear, in these fantasies of mine, the treachery of my memory, lest, by inadvertence, it should make me write the same thing twice. I hate to examine myself, and never review, but very unwillingly, what has once escaped my pen. I here set down nothing new. These are common thoughts, and having, peradventure, conceived them a hundred times, I am afraid I have set them down somewhere else already. Repetition is everywhere troublesome, though it were in Homer; but 'tis ruinous in things that have only a superficial and transitory show. I do not love over-insisting, even in the most profitable things, as in Seneca; and the usage of his stoical school displeases me, to repeat, upon every subject, at full length and width the principles and presuppositions that serve in general, and always to re-allege anew common and universal reasons.

My memory grows cruelly worse every day:—

> *"As if my dry throat had drunk seducing cups of Lethaean oblivion;"*

I must be fain for the time to come (for hitherto, thanks be to God, nothing has happened much amiss), whereas others seek time and opportunity to think of what they have to say, to avoid all preparation, for fear of tying myself to some obligation upon which I must insist. To be tied and bound to a thing puts me quite out, and to depend upon so weak an instrument as my memory. I never read this following story that I am not offended at it with a personal and natural resentment: Lyncestes, accused of conspiracy against Alexander, the day that he was brought out before the army, according to the custom, to be heard as to what he could say for himself, had learned a studied speech, of which, hesitating and stammering, he pronounced some words. Whilst growing more and more perplexed, whilst struggling with his memory, and trying to recollect what he had to say, the soldiers nearest to him charged their pikes against him and killed him, looking upon his as convict; his confusion and silence served them for a confession; for having had so much leisure to prepare himself in prison, they concluded that it was not his memory that failed him, but that his

conscience tied up his tongue and stopped his mouth. And, truly, well said; the place, the assembly, the expectation, astounded a man, even when he has but the ambition to speak well; what can a man do when ’tis a harangue upon which his life depends?

For my part, the very being tied to what I am to say is enough to loose me from it. When I wholly commit and refer myself to my memory, I lay so much stress upon it that it sinks under me: it grows dismayed with the burden. So much as I trust to it, so much do I put myself out of my own power, even to the finding it difficult to keep my own countenance; and have been sometimes very much put to it to conceal the slavery wherein I was engaged; whereas my design is to manifest, in speaking, a perfect calmness both of face and accent, and casual and unpremeditated motions, as rising from present occasions, choosing rather to say nothing to purpose than to show that I came prepared to speak well, a thing especially unbecoming a man of my profession, and of too great obligation on him who cannot retain much. The preparation begets a great deal more expectation than it will satisfy. A man often strips himself to his doublet to leap no farther than he would have done in his gown:—

“Nothing is so adverse to those who make it their business to please as expectation.”

It is recorded of the orator Curio, that when he proposed the division of his oration into three or four parts, or three or four arguments or reasons, it often happened either that he forgot some one, or added one or two more. I have always avoided falling into this inconvenience, having ever hated these promises and prescriptions, not only out of distrust of my memory, but also because this method relishes too much of the artist:—

“Simplicity becomes warriors.”

’Tis enough that I have promised to myself never again to take upon me to speak in a place of respect, for as to speaking, when a man reads his speech, besides that it is very absurd, it is a mighty disadvantage to those who naturally could give it a grace by action; and to rely upon the mercy of my present invention, I would much less do it; ’tis heavy and perplexed, and such as would never furnish me in sudden and important necessities.

Permit, reader, this essay its course also, and this third sitting to finish the rest of my picture: I add, but I correct not. First, because I conceive that a man having once parted with his labors to the world, he has no further right to them; let him do better if he can, in some new undertaking, but not

adulterate what he has already sold. Of such dealers nothing should be bought till after they are dead. Let them well consider what they do before they produce it to the light: who hastens them? My book is always the same, saving that upon every new edition (that the buyer may not go away quite empty) I take the liberty to add (as 'tis but an ill-jointed marqueterie) some supernumerary emblem; it is but over-weight, that does not disfigure the primitive form of the essays, but, by a little artful subtlety, gives a kind of particular value to every one of those that follow. Thence, however, will easily happen some transposition of chronology, my stories taking place according to their opportuneness, not always according to their age.

Secondly, because as to what concerns myself, I fear to lose by change: my understanding does not always go forward, it goes backward too. I do not much less suspect my fancies for being the second or the third, than for being the first, or present, or past; we often correct ourselves as foolishly as we do others. I am grown older by a great many years since my first publications, which were in the year 1580; but I very much doubt whether I am grown an inch the wiser. I now, and I anon, are two several persons; but whether better, I cannot determine. It were a fine thing to be old, if we only travelled towards improvement; but 'tis a drunken, stumbling, reeling, infirm motion: like that of reeds, which the air casually waves to and fro at pleasure. Antiochus had in his youth strongly written in favor of the Academy; in his old age he wrote as much against it; would not, which of these two soever I should follow, be still Antiochus? After having established the uncertainty, to go about to establish the certainty of human opinions, was it not to establish doubt, and not certainty, and to promise that had he had yet another age to live, he would be always upon terms of altering his judgment, not so much for the better, as for something else?

The public favor has given me a little more confidence than I expected; but what I most fear is, lest I should glut the world with my writings; I had rather, of the two, pique my reader than tire him, as a learned man of my time has done. Praise is always pleasing, let it come from whom, or upon what account it will; yet ought a man to understand why he is commended, that he may know how to keep up the same reputation still: imperfections themselves may get commendation. The vulgar and common estimation is seldom happy in hitting; and I am much mistaken if, amongst the writings of my time, the worst are not those which have most gained the

popular applause. For my part, I return my thanks to those good-natured men who are pleased to take my weak endeavors in good part; the faults of the workmanship are nowhere so apparent as in a matter which of itself has no recommendation. Blame not me, reader, for those that slip in here by the fancy or inadvertency of others; every hand, every artisan, contribute their own materials; I neither concern myself with orthography (and only care to have it after the old way) nor pointing, being very inexpert both in the one and the other. Where they wholly break the sense, I am very little concerned, for they at least discharge me; but where they substitute a false one, as they so often do, and wrest me to their conception, they ruin me. When the sentence, nevertheless, is not strong enough for my proportion, a civil person ought to reject it as spurious, and none of mine. Whoever shall know how lazy I am, and how indulgent to my own humor, will easily believe that I had rather write as many more essays, than be tied to revise these over again for so childish a correction.

I said elsewhere, that being planted in the very centre of this new religion, I am not only deprived of any great familiarity with men of other kind of manners than my own, and of other opinions, by which they hold together, as by a tie that supersedes all other obligations; but, moreover, I do not live without danger, amongst men to whom all things are equally lawful, and of whom the most part cannot offend the laws more than they have already done; from which the extremest degree of license proceeds. All the particular circumstances respecting me being summed up together, I do not find one man of my country, who pays so dear for the defence of our laws both in loss and damages (as the lawyers say) as myself; and some there are who vapor and brag of their zeal and constancy, that if things were justly weighed, do much less than I. My house, as one that has ever been open and free to all comers, and civil to all (for I could never persuade myself to make it a garrison of war, war being a thing that I prefer to see as remote as may be), has sufficiently merited popular kindness, and so that it would be a hard matter justly to insult over me upon my own dunghill; and I look upon it as a wonderful and exemplary thing that it yet continues a virgin from blood and plunder during so long a storm, and so many neighboring revolutions and tumults. For to confess the truth, it had been possible enough for a man of my complexion to have shaken hands with any one constant and continued form whatever; but the contrary invasion and incursions, alternations and vicissitudes of fortune round about me,

have hitherto more exasperated than calmed and mollified the temper of the country, and involved me, over and over again, with invincible difficulties and dangers.

I escape, ’tis true, but am troubled that it is more by chance, and something of my own prudence, than by justice; and am not satisfied to be out of the protection of the laws, and under any other safeguard than theirs. As matters stand, I live, above one half, by the favor of others, which is an untoward obligation. I do not like to owe my safety either to the generosity or affection of great persons, who allow me my legality and my liberty, or to the obliging manners of my predecessors, or my own: for what if I were another kind of man? If my deportment, and the frankness of my conversation, or relationship, oblige my neighbors, ’tis cruel that they should acquit themselves of that obligation in only permitting me to live, and that they may say, “We allow him the free liberty of having divine service read in his own private chapel, when it is interdicted in all churches round about, and allow him the use of his goods and his life, as one who protects our wives and cattle in time of need.” For my house has for many descents shared in the reputation of Lycurgus the Athenian, who was the general depository and guardian of the purses of his fellow-citizens. Now I am clearly of opinion that a man should live by right and by authority, and not either by recompense or favor. How many gallant men have rather chosen to lose their lives than to be debtors for them? I hate to subject myself to any sort of obligation, but above all, to that which binds me by the duty of honor. I think nothing so dear as what has been given me, and this because my will lies at pawn under the title of gratitude, and more willingly accept of services that are to be sold; I feel that for the last I give nothing but money, but for the other I give myself.

The knot that binds me by the laws of courtesy binds me more than that of civil constraint; I am much more at ease when bound by a scrivener, than by myself. Is it not reason that my conscience should be much more engaged when men simply rely upon it? In a bond, my faith owes nothing, because it has nothing lent it; let them trust to the security they have taken without me. I had much rather break the wall of a prison and the laws themselves than my own word. I am nice, even to superstition, in keeping my promises, and, therefore, upon all occasions have a care to make them uncertain and conditional. To those of no great moment, I add the jealousy of my own rule, to make them weight; it wracks and oppresses me with its

own interest. Even in actions wholly my own and free, if I once say a thing, I conceive that I have bound myself, and that delivering it to the knowledge of another, I have positively enjoined it my own performance. Methinks I promise it, if I but say it: and therefore am not apt to say much of that kind. The sentence that I pass upon myself is more severe than that of a judge, who only considers the common obligation; but my conscience looks upon it with a more severe or penetrating eye. I lag in those duties to which I should be compelled if I did not go:—

"This itself is so far just, that it is rightly done, if it is voluntary."

If the action has not some splendor of liberty, it has neither grace nor honor:—

"That which the laws compel us to do, we scarcely do with a will:"

where necessity draws me, I love to let my will take its own course:—

"For whatever is compelled by power, is more imputed to him that exacts than to him that performs."

I know some who follow this rule, even to injustice; who will sooner give than restore, sooner lend than pay, and will do them the least good to whom they are most obliged. I don't go so far as that, but I'm not far off.

I so much love to disengage and disobligate myself, that I have sometimes looked upon ingratitudes, affronts, and indignities which I have received from those to whom either by nature or accident I was bound in some way of friendship, as an advantage to me; taking this occasion of their ill-usage, for an acquaintance and discharge of so much of my debt. And though I still continue to pay them all the external offices of public reason, I, notwithstanding, find a great saving in doing that upon the account of justice which I did upon the score of affection, and am a little eased of the attention and solicitude of my inward will:—

"'Tis the part of a wise man to keep a curbing hand upon the impetus of friendship, as upon that of his horse;"

'tis in me, too urging and pressing where I take; at least, for a man who loves not to be strained at all. And this husbanding my friendship serves me for a sort of consolation in the imperfections of those in whom I am concerned. I am very sorry they are not such as I could wish they were, but then I also am spared somewhat of my application and engagement towards them. I approve of a man who is the less fond of his child for having a scald head, or for being crooked; and not only when he is ill-conditioned, but also

when he is of unhappy disposition, and imperfect in his limbs (God himself has abated so much from his value and natural estimation), provided he carry himself in this coldness of affection with moderation and exact justice: proximity, with me, lessens not defects, but rather aggravates them.

After all, according to what I understand in the science of benefit and acknowledgment, which is a subtle science, and of great use, I know no person whatever more free and less indebted than I am at this hour. What I do owe is simply to foreign obligations and benefits; as to anything else, no man is more absolutely clear:—

"The gifts of great men are unknown to me."

Princes give me a great deal if they take nothing from me, and do me good enough if they do me no harm; that's all I ask from them. O how am I obliged to God, that he has been pleased I should immediately receive from his bounty all I have, and specially reserved all my obligation to himself! How earnestly do I beg of his holy compassion that I may never owe essential thanks to any one! O happy liberty wherein I have thus far lived! May it continue with me to the last. I endeavor to have no express need of any one:—

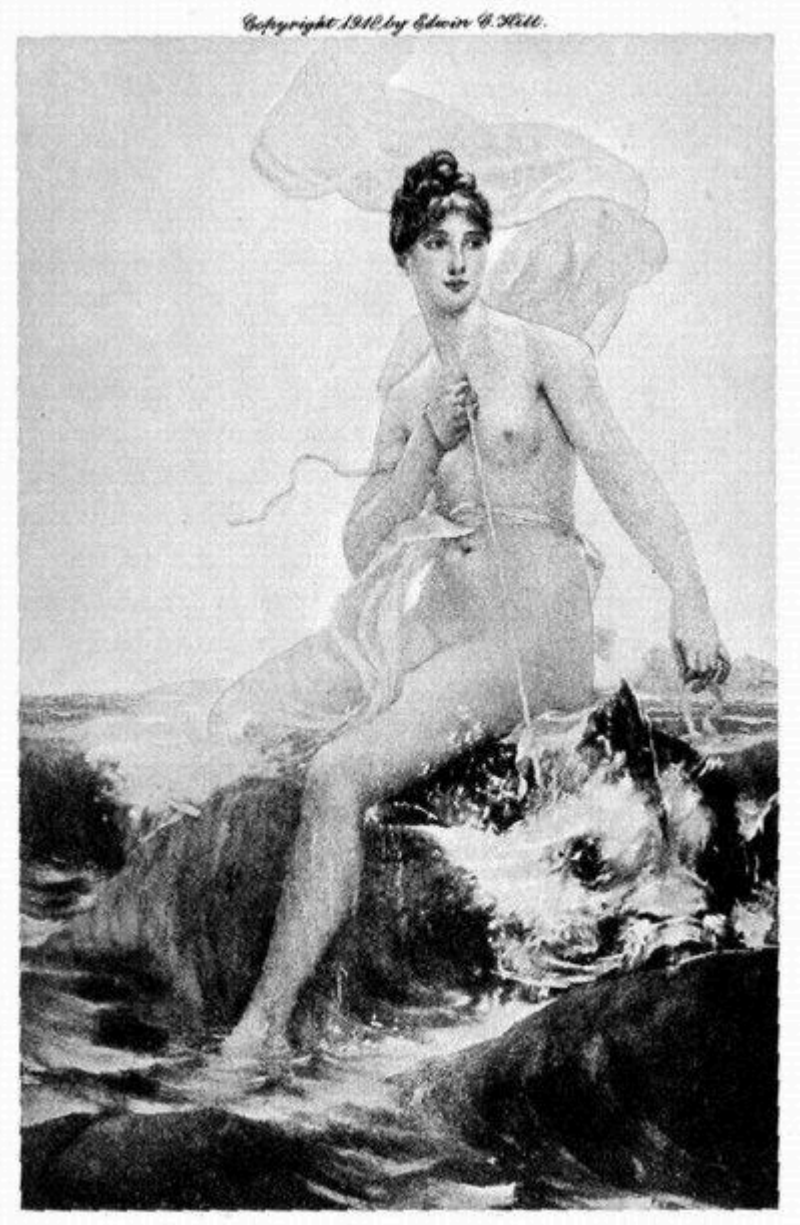
"All my hope is in myself."

'Tis what every one may do in himself, but more easily they whom God has placed in a condition exempt from natural and urgent necessities. It is a wretched and dangerous thing to depend upon others; we ourselves, in whom is ever the most just and safest dependence, are not sufficiently sure.

I have nothing mine but myself, and yet the possession is, in part, defective and borrowed. I fortify myself both in courage, which is the strongest assistant, and also in fortune, therein wherewith to satisfy myself, though everything else should forsake me. Hippias of Elis not only furnished himself with knowledge, that he might, at need, cheerfully retire from all other company to enjoy the Muses: nor only with the knowledge of philosophy, to teach his soul to be contented with itself, and bravely to subsist without outward conveniences, when fate would have it so; he was, moreover, so careful as to learn to cook, to shave himself, to make his own clothes, his own shoes and drawers, to provide for all his necessities in himself, and to wean himself from the assistance of others. A man more freely and cheerfully enjoys borrowed conveniences, when it is not an enjoyment forced and constrained by need; and when he has, in his own will and fortune, the means to live without them. I know myself very well;

but ’tis hard for me to imagine any so pure liberality of any one towards me, any so frank and free hospitality, that would not appear to me discreditable, tyrannical, and tainted with reproach, if necessity had reduced me to it. As giving is an ambitious and authoritative quality, so is accepting a quality of submission; witness the insulting and quarrelsome refusal that Bajazet made of the presents that Tamerlane sent him; and those that were offered on the part of the Emperor Solyman to the Emperor of Calicut, so angered him, that he not only rudely rejected them, saying that neither he nor any of his predecessors had ever been wont to take, and that it was their office to give; but, moreover, caused the ambassadors sent with the gifts to be put into a dungeon. When Thetis, says Aristotle, flatters Jupiter, when the Lacedaemonians flatter the Athenians, they do not put them in mind of the good they have done them, which is always odious, but of the benefits they have received from them. Such as I see so frequently employ every one in their affairs, and thrust themselves into so much obligation, would never do it, did they but relish as I do the sweetness of a pure liberty, and did they but weigh, as wise men should, the burden of obligation: ’tis sometimes, peradventure, fully paid, but ’tis never dissolved. ’Tis a miserable slavery to a man who loves to be at full liberty in all respects. Such as know me, both above and below me in station, are able to say whether they have ever known a man less importuning, soliciting, entreating, and pressing upon others than I. If I am so, and a degree beyond all modern example, ’tis no great wonder, so many parts of my manners contributing to it: a little natural pride, an impatience at being refused, the moderation of my desires and designs, my incapacity for business, and my most beloved qualities, idleness and freedom; by all these together I have conceived a mortal hatred to being obliged to any other, or by any other than myself. I leave no stone unturned to do without it, rather than employ the bounty of another in any light or important occasion or necessity whatever. My friends strangely trouble me when they ask me to ask a third person; and I think it costs me little less to disengage him who is indebted to me, by making use of him, than to engage myself to him who owes me nothing. These conditions being removed, and provided they require of me nothing if any great trouble or care (for I have declared mortal war against all care), I am very ready to do every one the best service I can. I have been very willing to seek occasion to do people a good turn, and to attach them to me; and methinks there is no more agreeable employment for our means. But I have yet more avoided

receiving than sought occasions of giving, and moreover, according to Aristotle, it is more easy. My fortune has allowed me but little to do others good withal, and the little it can afford, is put into a pretty close hand. Had I been born a great person, I should have been ambitious to have made myself beloved, not to make myself feared or admired: shall I more plainly express it? I should more have endeavored to please than to profit others. Cyrus very wisely, and by the mouth of a great captain, and still greater philosopher, prefers his bounty and benefits much before his valor and warlike conquests; and the elder Scipio, wherever he would raise himself in esteem, sets a higher value upon his affability and humanity, than on his prowess and victories, and has always this glorious saying in his mouth: “That he has given his enemies as much occasion to love him as his friends.” I will then say, that if a man must, of necessity, owe something, it ought to be by a more legitimate title than that whereof I am speaking, to which the necessity of this miserable war compels me; and not in so great a debt as that of my total preservation both of life and fortune: it overwhelms me.



Thetis. From painting by Albert Jules Edouard.

I have a thousand times gone to bed in my own house with an apprehension that I should be betrayed and murdered that very night; compounding with fortune, that it might be without terror and with quick despatch; and, after my Paternoster, I have cried out:—

"Shall impious soldiers have these newploughed grounds?"

What remedy? 'tis the place of my birth, and that of most of my ancestors; they have here fixed their affection and name. We inure ourselves to whatever we are accustomed to; and in so miserable a condition as ours is, custom is a great bounty of nature, which benumbs our senses to the

sufferance of many evils. A civil war has this with it worse than other wars have, to make us stand sentinels in our own houses:—

“ ’Tis miserable to protect one’s life by doors and walls, and to be scarcely safe in one’s own house!”

’Tis a grievous extremity for a man to be jostled even in his own house and domestic repose. The country where I live is always the first in arms and the last that lays them down, and where there is never an absolute peace:—

“Even when there’s peace, there is here still the fear of war: when Fortune troubles peace, this is ever the way by which war passes. . . .”

“We might have lived happier in the remote East or in the icy North, or among the wandering tribes. . . .”

I sometimes extract the means to fortify myself against these considerations from indifference and indolence, which, in some sort, bring us on to resolution. It often befalls me to imagine and expect mortal dangers with a kind of delight: I stupidly plunge myself headlong into death, without considering or taking a view of it, as into a deep and obscure abyss which swallows me up at one leap, and involves me in an instant in a profound sleep, without any sense of pain. And in these short and violent deaths, the consequence that I foresee administers more consolation to me than the effect does fear. They say, that as life is not better for being long, so death is better for being not long. I do not so much evade being dead, as I enter into confidence with dying. I wrap and shroud myself into the storm that is to blind and carry me away with the fury of a sudden and insensible attack. Moreover, if it should fall out that, as some gardeners say, roses and violets spring more odoriferous near garlic and onions, by reason that the last suck and imbibe all the ill odor of the earth; so, if these depraved natures should also attract all the malignity of my air and climate, and render it so much better and purer by their vicinity, I should not lose all. That cannot be: but there may be something in this, that goodness is more beautiful and attractive when it is rare; and that contrariety and diversity fortify and consolidate well-doing within itself, and inflame it by the jealousy of opposition and by glory. Thieves and robbers, of their special favor, have no particular spite at me; no more have I to them: I should have my hands too full. Like consciences are lodged under several sorts of robes; like cruelty, disloyalty, rapine; and so much the worse, and more falsely, when the more secure and concealed under color of the laws. I less hate an

open professed injury than one that is treacherous; an enemy in arms, than an enemy in a gown. Our fever has seized upon a body that is not much the worse for it; there was fire before, and now 'tis broken out into a flame; the noise is greater, not the evil. I ordinarily answer such as ask me the reason of my travels, "That I know very well what I fly from, but not what I seek." If they tell me that there may be as little soundness amongst foreigners, and that their manners are no better than ours: I first reply, that it is hard to be believed:—

"There are so many forms of crime!"

secondly, that it is always gain to change an ill condition for one that is uncertain; and that the ills of others ought not to afflict us so much as our own.

I will not forget this, that I never revolt so much against France, that I do not regard Paris with a favorable eye; that city has ever had my heart from my infancy, and it has fallen out, as of excellent things, that the more beautiful cities I have seen since, the more the beauty of this still wins upon my affection. I love her for herself, and more in her own native being, than in all the pomp of foreign and acquired embellishments. I love her tenderly, even to her warts and blemishes. I am a Frenchman only through this great city, great in people, great in the felicity of her situation; but, above all, great and incomparable in variety and diversity of commodities: the glory of France, and one of the most noble ornaments of the world. May God drive our divisions far from her. Entire and united, I think her sufficiently defended from all other violences. I give her caution that, of all sorts of people, those will be the worst that shall set her in discord; I have no fear for her, but of herself; and, certainly, I have as much fear for her as for any other part of the kingdom. Whilst she shall continue, I shall never want a retreat, where I may stand at bay, sufficient to make me amends for parting with any other retreat.

Not because Socrates has said so, but because it is in truth my own humor, and peradventure not without some excess, I look upon all men as my compatriots, and embrace a Polander as a Frenchman, preferring the universal and common tie to all national ties whatever. I am not much taken with the sweetness of a native air: acquaintance wholly new and wholly my own appear to me full as good as the other common and fortuitous ones with our neighbors: friendships that are purely of our own acquiring ordinarily carry it above those to which the communication of climate or of

blood oblige us. Nature has placed us in the world free and unbound; we imprison ourselves in certain straits, like the kings of Persia, who, obliged themselves to drink no other water but that of the river Choaspes, foolishly quitted claim to their right in all other streams, and, so far as concerned themselves, dried up all the other rivers of the world. What Socrates did towards his end, to look upon a sentence of banishment as worse than a sentence of death against him, I shall, I think, never be either so decrepit or so strictly habituated to my own country to be of that opinion. These celestial lives have images enough that I embrace more by esteem than affection; and they have some also so elevated and extraordinary that I cannot embrace them so much as by esteem, forasmuch as I cannot conceive them. That fancy was singular in a man who thought the whole world his city; it is true that he disdained travel, and had hardly ever set his foot out of the Attic territories. What say you to his complaint of the money his friends offered to save his life, and that he refused to come out of prison by the mediation of others, in order not to disobey the laws in a time when they were otherwise so corrupt? These examples are of the first kind for me; of the second, there are others that I could find out in the same person: many of these rare examples surpass the force of my action, but some of them, moreover, surpass the force of my judgment.

Besides these reasons, travel is in my opinion a very profitable exercise; the soul is there continually employed in observing new and unknown things, and I do not know, as I have often said, a better school wherein to model life than by incessantly exposing to it the diversity of so many other lives, fancies, and usances, and by making it relish so perpetual a variety of forms of human nature. The body is, therein, neither idle nor overwrought; and that moderate agitation puts it in breath. I can keep on horseback, tormented with the stone as I am, without alighting or being weary, eight or ten hours together:—

“Beyond the strength and lot of age.”

No season is enemy to me but the parching heat of a scorching sun; for the umbrellas made use of in Italy, ever since the time of the ancient Romans, more burden a man’s arm than they relieve his head. I would fain know how it was that the Persians, so long ago and in the infancy of luxury, made ventilators where they wanted them, and planted shades, as Xenophon reports they did. I love rain, and to dabble in the dirt, as well as ducks do. The change of air and climate never touches me; every sky is alike; I am

only troubled with inward alterations which I breed within myself, and those are not so frequent in travel. I am hard to be got out, but being once upon the road, I hold out as well as the best. I take as much pains in little as in great attempts, and am as solicitous to equip myself for a short journey, if but to visit a neighbor, as for the longest voyage. I have learned to travel after the Spanish fashion, and to make but one stage of a great many miles; and in excessive heats I always travel by night, from sunset to sunrise. The other method of baiting by the way, in haste and hurry to gobble up a dinner, is, especially in short days, very inconvenient. My horses perform the better; never any horse tired under me that was able to hold out the first day's journey. I water them at every brook I meet, and have only a care they have so much way to go before I come to my inn, as will digest the water in their bellies. My unwillingness to rise in a morning gives my servants leisure to dine at their ease before they set out; for my own part, I never eat too late; my appetite comes to me in eating, and not else; I am never hungry but at table.

Some of my friends blame me for continuing this travelling humor, being married and old. But they are out in't; 'tis the best time to leave a man's house, when he has put it into a way of continuing without him, and settled such order as corresponds with its former government. 'Tis much greater imprudence to abandon it to a less faithful housekeeper, and who will be less solicitous to look after your affairs.

The most useful and honorable knowledge and employment for the mother of a family is the science of good housewifery. I see some that are covetous indeed, but very few that are good managers. 'Tis the supreme quality of a woman, which a man ought to seek before any other, as the only dowry that must ruin or preserve our houses. Let men say what they will, according to the experience I have learned, I require in married women the economical virtue above all other virtues; I put my wife to't as a concern of her own, leaving her, by my absence, the whole government of my affairs. I see, and am vexed to see, in several families I know, Monsieur about noon come home all jaded and ruffled about his affairs, when Madame is still dressing her hair and tricking up herself, forsooth, in her closet: this is for queens to do, and that's a question, too: 'tis ridiculous and unjust that the laziness of our wives should be maintained with our sweat and labor. No man, so far as in me lies, shall have a clearer, a more quiet and free fruition

of his estate than I. If the husband bring matter, nature herself will that the wife find the form.

As to the duties of conjugal friendship, that some think to be impaired by these absences, I am quite of another opinion. It is, on the contrary, an intelligence that easily cools by a too frequent and assiduous companionship. Every strange woman appears charming, and we all find by experience that being continually together is not so pleasing as to part for a time and meet again. These interruptions fill me with fresh affection towards my family, and render my house more pleasant to me. Change warms my appetite to the one and then to the other. I know that the arms of friendship are long enough to reach from the one end of the world to the other, and especially this, where there is a continual communication of offices that rouse the obligation and remembrance. The Stoics say that there is so great connection and relation amongst the sages, that he who dines in France nourishes his companion in Egypt; and that whoever does but hold out his finger, in what part of the world soever, all the sages upon the habitable earth feel themselves assisted by it. Fruition and possession principally appertain to the imagination; it more fervently and constantly embraces what it is in quest of, than what we hold in our arms. Cast up your daily amusements; you will find that you are most absent from your friend when he is present with you; his presence relaxes your attention, and gives you liberty to absent yourself at every turn and upon every occasion. When I am away at Rome, I keep and govern my house, and the conveniences I there left; see my walls rise, my trees shoot, and my revenue increase or decrease, very near as well as when I am there:—

"My house and the forms of places float before my eyes."

If we enjoy nothing but what we touch, we may say farewell to the money in our chests, and to our sons when they are gone a-hunting. We will have them nearer to us: is the garden, or half a day's journey from home, far? What is ten leagues: far or near? If near, what is eleven, twelve, or thirteen, and so by degrees. In earnest, if there be a woman who can tell her husband what step ends the near and what step begins the remote, I would advise her to stop between:—

"Let the end shut out all disputes. . . . I use what is permitted; I pluck out the hairs of the horse's tail one by one; while I thus outwit my opponent:"

and let them boldly call philosophy to their assistance; in whose teeth it may be cast that, seeing it neither discerns the one nor the other end of the joint, betwixt the too much and the little, the long and the short, the light and the heavy, the near and the remote; that seeing it discovers neither the beginning nor the end, it must needs judge very uncertainly of the middle: —

"Nature has given to us no knowledge of the end of things."

Are they not still wives and friends to the dead who are not at the end of this but in the other world? We embrace not only the absent, but those who have been, and those who are not yet. We do not promise in marriage to be continually twisted and linked together, like some little animals that we see, or, like the bewitched folks of Karenty, tied together like dogs; and a wife ought not to be so greedily enamored of her husband's foreparts, that she cannot endure to see him turn his back, if occasion be. But may not this saying of that excellent painter of woman's humors be here introduced, to show the reason of their complaints?—

> *"Your wife, if you loiter, thinks that you love or are beloved; or that you are drinking or following your inclination; and that it is well for you when it is ill for her;"*

or may it not be, that of itself opposition and contradiction entertain and nourish them, and that they sufficiently accommodate themselves, provided they incommodate you?

In true friendship, wherein I am perfect, I more give myself to my friend, than I endeavor to attract him to me. I am not only better pleased in doing him service than if he conferred a benefit upon me, but, moreover, had rather he should do himself good than me, and he most obliges me when he does so; and if absence be either more pleasant or convenient for him, 'tis also more acceptable to me than his presence; neither is it properly absence, when we can write to one another: I have sometimes made good use of our separation from one another: we better filled and further extended the possession of life in being parted. He lived, enjoyed, and saw for me, and I for him, as fully as if he had himself been there; one part of us remained idle, and we were too much blended in one another when we were together; the distance of place rendered the conjunction of our wills more rich. This insatiable desire of personal presence a little implies weakness in the fruition of souls.

As to what concerns age, which is alleged against me, ’tis quite contrary; ’tis for youth to subject itself to common opinions, and to curb itself to please others; it has wherewithal to please both the people and itself; we have but too much ado to please ourselves alone. As natural conveniences fail, let us supply them with those that are artificial. ’Tis injustice to excuse youth for pursuing its pleasures, and to forbid old men to seek them. When young, I concealed my wanton passions with prudence; now I am old, I chase away melancholy by debauch. And thus do the platonic laws forbid men to travel till forty or fifty years old, so that travel might be more useful and instructive in so mature an age. I should sooner subscribe to the second article of the same Laws, which forbids it after threescore.

“But, at such an age, you will never return from so long a journey.” What care I for that? I neither undertake it to return, nor to finish it: my business is only to keep myself in motion, whilst motion pleases me; I only walk for the walk’s sake. They who run after a benefit or a hare, run not; they only run who run at base, and to exercise their running. My design is divisible throughout: it is not grounded upon any great hopes: every day concludes my expectation: and the journey of my life is carried on after the same manner. And yet I have seen places enough a great way off, where I could have wished to have stayed. And why not, if Chrysippus, Cleanthes, Diogenes, Zeno, Antipater, so many sages of the sourest sect, readily abandoned their country, without occasion of complaint, and only for the enjoyment of another air. In earnest, that which most displeases me in all my travels is, that I cannot resolve to settle my abode where I should best like, but that I must always propose to myself to return, to accommodate myself to the common humor.

If I feared to die in any other place than that of my birth; if I thought I should die more uneasily remote from my own family, I should hardly go out of France; I should not, without fear, step out of my parish; I feel death always pinching me by the throat or by the back. But I am otherwise constituted; ’tis in all places alike to me. Yet, might I have my choice, I think I should rather choose to die on horseback than in a bed; out of my own house, and far from my own people. There is more heartbreaking than consolation in taking leave of one’s friends; I am willing to omit that civility, for that, of all the offices of friendship, is the only one that is unpleasant; and I could, with all my heart, dispense with that great and

eternal farewell. If there be any convenience in so many standers-by, it brings a hundred inconveniences along with it. I have seen many dying miserably surrounded with all this train: 'tis a crowd that chokes them. 'Tis against duty, and is a testimony of little kindness and little care, to permit you to die in repose; one torments your eyes, another your ears, another your tongue; you have neither sense nor member that is not worried by them. Your heart is wounded with compassion to hear the mourning of friends, and, perhaps, with anger, to hear the counterfeit condolings of pretenders. Who ever has been delicate and sensitive, when well, is much more so when ill. In such a necessity, a gentle hand is required, accommodated to his sentiment, to scratch him just in the place where he itches, otherwise scratch him not at all. If we stand in need of a wise woman to bring us into the world, we have much more need of a still wiser man to help us out of it. Such a one, and a friend to boot, a man ought to purchase at any cost for such an occasion. I am not yet arrived to that pitch of disdainful vigor that is fortified in itself, that nothing can assist or disturb; I am of a lower form; I endeavor to hide myself, and to escape from this passage, not by fear, but by art. I do not intend in this act of dying to make proof and show of my constancy. For whom should I do it? all the right and interest I have in reputation will then cease. I content myself with a death involved within itself, quiet, solitary, and all my own, suitable to my retired and private life; quite contrary to the Roman superstition, where a man was looked upon as unhappy who died without speaking, and who had not his nearest relations to close his eyes. I have enough to do to comfort myself, without having to console others; thoughts enough in my head, not to need that circumstances should possess me with new; and matter enough to occupy me without borrowing. This affair is out of the part of society; 'tis the act of one single person. Let us live and be merry amongst our friends; let us go repine and die amongst strangers; a man may find those, for his money, who will shift his pillow and rub his feet, and will trouble him no more than he would have them; who will present to him an indifferent countenance, and suffer him to govern himself, and to complain according to his own method.

I wean myself daily by my reason from this childish and inhuman humor, of desiring by our sufferings to move the compassion and mourning of our friends: we stretch our own incommodities beyond their just extent when we extract tears from others; and the constancy which we commend

in every one in supporting his adverse fortune, we accuse and reproach in our friends when the evil is our own; we are not satisfied that they should be sensible of our condition only, unless they be, moreover, afflicted. A man should diffuse joy, but, as much as he can, smother grief. He who makes himself lamented without reason is a man not to be lamented when there shall be real cause: to be always complaining is the way never to be lamented; by making himself always in so pitiful a taking, he is never commiserated by any. He who makes himself out dead when he is alive, is subject to be thought living when he is dying. I have seen some who have taken it ill when they have been told that they looked well, and that their pulse was good; restrain their smiles, because they betrayed a recovery, and be angry at their health because it was not to be lamented: and, which is a great deal more, these were not women. I describe my infirmities, such as they really are, at most, and avoid all expressions of evil prognostic and composed exclamations. If not mirth, at least a temperate countenance in the standersby, is proper in the presence of a wise sick man: he does not quarrel with health, for, seeing himself in a contrary condition, he is pleased to contemplate it sound and entire in others, and at least to enjoy it for company: he does not, for feeling himself melt away, abandon all living thoughts, nor avoid ordinary discourse. I would study sickness whilst I am well; when it has seized me, it will make its impression real enough, without the help of my imagination. We prepare ourselves beforehand for the journeys we undertake, and resolve upon them; we leave the appointment of the hour when to take horse to the company, and in their favor defer it.

I find this unexpected advantage in the publication of my manners, that it in some sort serves me for a rule. I have, at times, some consideration of not betraying the history of my life: this public declaration obliges me to keep my way, and not to give the lie to the image I have drawn of my qualities, commonly less deformed and contradictory than consists with the malignity and infirmity of the judgments of this age. The uniformity and simplicity of my manners produce a face of easy interpretation; but because the fashion is a little new and not in use, it gives too great opportunity to slander. Yet so it is, that whoever would fairly assail me, I think I so sufficiently assist his purpose in my known and avowed imperfections, that he may that way satisfy his ill-nature without fighting with the wind. If I myself, to anticipate accusation and discovery, confess enough to frustrate

his malice, as he conceives, 'tis but reason that he make use of his right of amplification, and to wire-draw my vices as far as he can; attack has its rights beyond justice; and let him make the roots of those errors I have laid open to him, shoot up into trees: let him make his use, not only of those I am really affected with, but also of those that only threaten me; injurious vices, both in quality and number; let him cudgel me that way. I should willingly follow the example of the philosopher Bion: Antigonus being about to reproach him with the meanness of his birth, he presently cut him short with this declaration: "I am," said he, "the son of a slave, a butcher, and branded, and of a strumpet my father married in the lowest of his fortune; both of them were whipped for offences they had committed. An orator bought me, when a child, and finding me a pretty and hopeful boy, bred me up, and when he died left me all his estate, which I have transported into this city of Athens, and here settled myself to the study of philosophy. Let the historians never trouble themselves with inquiring about me: I will tell them about it." A free and generous confession enervates reproach and disarms slander. So it is that, one thing with another, I fancy men as often commend as undervalue me beyond reason; as, methinks also, from my childhood, in rank and degree of honor, they have given me a place rather above than below my right. I should find myself more at ease in a country where these degrees were either regulated or not regarded. Amongst men, when an altercation about the precedence either of walking or sitting exceeds three replies, 'tis reputed uncivil. I never stick at giving or taking place out of rule, to avoid the trouble of such ceremony; and never any man had a mind to go before me, but I permitted him to do it.

Besides this profit I make of writing of myself, I have also hoped for this other advantage, that if it should fall out that my humor should please or jump with those of some honest man before I die, he would then desire and seek to be acquainted with me. I have given him a great deal of made-way; for all that he could have, in many years, acquired by close familiarity, he has seen in three days in this memorial, and more surely and exactly. A pleasant fancy: many things that I would not confess to any one in particular, I deliver to the public, and send my best friends to a bookseller's shop, there to inform themselves concerning my most secret thoughts:—

"We give our hearts to be examined."

Did I, by good direction, know where to seek any one proper for my conversation, I should certainly go a great way to find him out: for the

sweetness of suitable and agreeable company cannot, in my opinion, be bought too dear. O what a thing is a true friend! how true is that old saying, that the use of a friend is more pleasing and necessary than the elements of water and fire!

To return to my subject: there is, then, no great harm in dying privately and far from home; we conceive ourselves obliged to retire for natural actions less unseemly and less terrible than this. But, moreover, such as are reduced to spin out a long languishing life, ought not, perhaps, to wish to trouble a great family with their continual miseries; therefore the Indians, in a certain province, thought it just to knock a man on the head when reduced to such a necessity; and in another of their provinces, they all forsook him to shift for himself as well as he could. To whom do they not, at last, become tedious and insupportable? the ordinary offices of life do not go that length. You teach your best friends to be cruel perforce; hardening wife and children by long use neither to regard nor to lament your sufferings. The groans of the stone are grown so familiar to my people, that nobody takes any notice of them. And though we should extract some pleasure from their conversation (which does not always happen, by reason of the disparity of conditions, which easily begets contempt or envy toward any one whatever), is it not too much to make abuse of this half a lifetime? The more I should see them constrain themselves out of affection to be serviceable to me, the more I should be sorry for their pains. We have liberty to lean, but not to lay our whole weight upon others, so as to prop ourselves by their ruin; like him who caused little children's throats to be cut to make use of their blood for the cure of a disease he had, or that other, who was continually supplied with tender young girls to keep his old limbs warm in the night, and to mix the sweetness of their breath with his, sour and stinking. I should readily advise Venice as a retreat in this decline of life. Decrepitude is a solitary quality. I am sociable even to excess, yet I think it reasonable that I should now withdraw my troubles from the sight of the world and keep them to myself. Let me shrink and draw up myself in my own shell, like a tortoise, and learn to see men without hanging upon them. I should endanger them in so slippery a passage: 'tis time to turn my back to company.

"But, in these travels, you will be taken ill in some wretched place, where nothing can be had to relieve you." I always carry most things necessary about me; and besides, we cannot evade Fortune if she once

resolves to attack us. I need nothing extraordinary when I am sick. I will not be beholden to my bolus to do that for me which nature cannot. At the very beginning of my fevers and sicknesses that cast me down, whilst still entire, and but little disordered in health, I reconcile myself to Almighty God by the last Christian offices, and find myself by so doing less oppressed and more easy, and have got, methinks, so much the better of my disease. And I have yet less need of a notary or counsellor than of a physician. What I have not settled of my affairs when I was in health, let no one expect I should do it when I am sick. What I will do for the service of death is always done; I durst not so much as one day defer it; and if nothing be done, ’tis as much as to say either that doubt hindered my choice (and sometimes ’tis well chosen not to choose), or that I was positively resolved not to do anything at all.

I write my book for few men and for few years. Had it been matter of duration, I should have put it into firmer language. According to the continual variation that ours has been subject to, up to this day, who can expect that its present form should be in use fifty years hence? It slips every day through our fingers, and since I was born, it is altered above one-half. We say that it is now perfect; and every age says the same of its own. I shall hardly trust to that, so long as it varies and changes as it does. ’Tis for good and useful writings to rivet it to them, and its reputation will go according to the fortune of our state. For which reason I am not afraid to insert in it several private articles, which will spend their use amongst the men that are now living, and that concern the particular knowledge of some who will see further into them than every common reader. I will not, after all, as I often hear dead men spoken of, that men should say of me: “He judged, he lived so and so; he would have done this or that; could he have spoken when he was dying, he would have said so or so, and have given this thing or t’other; I knew him better than any.” Now, as much as decency permits, I here discover my inclinations and affections; but I do more willingly and freely by word of mouth to any one who desires to be informed. So it is that in these memoirs, if any one observe, he will find that I have either told or designed to tell all; what I cannot express, I point out with my finger:—

“But these traces are sufficient to enable one to learn the rest well.”

I leave nothing to be desired or to be guessed at concerning me. If people must be talking of me, I would have it to be justly and truly; I would

come again, with all my heart, from the other world to give any one the lie who should report me other than I was, though he did it to honor me. I perceive that people represent, even living men, quite another thing than what they really are; and had I not stoutly defended a friend whom I have lost, they would have torn him into a thousand contrary pieces.

To conclude the account of my poor humors, I confess that in my travels I seldom reach my inn but that it comes into my mind to consider whether I could there be sick and dying at my ease. I desire to be lodged in some private part of the house, remote from all noise, ill scents, and smoke. I endeavor to flatter death by these frivolous circumstances; or, to say better, to discharge myself from all other incumbrances, that I may have nothing to do, nor be troubled with anything but that which will lie heavy enough upon me without any other load. I would have my death share in the ease and conveniences of my life; 'tis a great part of it, and of great importance, and I hope it will not in the future contradict the past. Death has some forms that are more easy than others, and receives divers qualities, according to every one's fancy. Amongst the natural deaths, that which proceeds from weakness and stupor I think the most favorable; amongst those that are violent, I can worse endure to think of a precipice than of the fall of a house that will crush me in a moment, and of a wound with a sword than of a harquebus shot; I should rather have chosen to poison myself with Socrates, than stab myself with Cato. And, though it be all one, yet my imagination makes as great a difference as betwixt death and life, betwixt throwing myself into a burning furnace and plunging into the channel of a river: so idly does our fear more concern itself in the means than the effect. It is but an instant, 'tis true, but withal an instant of such weight, that I would willingly give a great many days of my life to pass it over after my own fashion. Since every one's imagination renders it more or less terrible, and since every one has some choice amongst the several forms of dying, let us try a little further to find some one that is wholly clear from all offence. Might not one render it even voluptuous, like the Commorientes of Antony and Cleopatra? I set aside the brave and exemplary efforts produced by philosophy and religion; but, amongst men of little mark there have been found some, such as Petronius and Tigellinus at Rome, condemned to despatch themselves, who have, as it were, rocked death asleep with the delicacy of their preparations; they have made it slip and steal away in the height of their accustomed diversions amongst girls

and good fellows; not a word of consolation, no mention of making a will, no ambitious affectation of constancy, no talk of their future condition; amongst sports, feastings, wit, and mirth, common and indifferent discourses, music, and amorous verses. Were it not possible for us to imitate this resolution after a more decent manner? Since there are deaths that are good for fools, deaths good for the wise, let us find out such as are fit for those who are betwixt both. My imagination suggests to me one that is easy, and, since we must die, to be desired. The Roman tyrants thought they did, in a manner, give a criminal life when they gave him the choice of his death. But was not Theophrastus, that so delicate, so modest, and so wise a philosopher, compelled by reason, when he durst say this verse, translated by Cicero:—

"Fortune, not wisdom, sways human life?"

Fortune assists the facility of the bargain of my life, having placed it in such a condition that for the future it can be neither advantage nor hindrance to those who are concerned in me; 'tis a condition that I would have accepted at any time of my life; but in this occasion of trussing up my baggage, I am particularly pleased that in dying I shall neither do them good nor harm. She has so ordered it, by a cunning compensation, that they who may pretend to any considerable advantage by my death will, at the same time, sustain a material inconvenience. Death sometimes is more grievous to us, in that it is grievous to others, and interests us in their interest as much as in our own, and sometimes more.

In this conveniency of lodging that I desire, I mix nothing of pomp and amplitude—I hate it rather; but a certain plain neatness, which is oftenest found in places where there is less of art, and that Nature has adorned with some grace that is all her own:—

"To eat not largely, but cleanly."

"More wit than cost."

And besides, 'tis for those whose affairs compel them to travel in the depth of winter through the Grisons country to be surprised upon the way with great inconveniences. I, who, for the most part, travel for my pleasure, do not order my affairs so ill. If the way be foul on my right hand, I turn on my left; if I find myself unfit to ride, I stay where I am; and, so doing, in earnest I see nothing that is not as pleasant and commodious as my own house. 'Tis true that I always find superfluity superfluous, and observe a kind of trouble even in abundance itself. Have I left anything behind me

unseen, I go back to see it; ’tis still on my way; I trace no certain line, either straight or crooked. Do I not find in the place to which I go what was reported to me—as it often falls out that the judgments of others do not jump with mine, and that I have found their reports for the most part false—I never complain of losing my labor: I have, at least, informed myself that what was told me was not true.

I have a constitution of body as free, and a palate as indifferent, as any man living: the diversity of manners of several nations only affects me in the pleasure of variety: every usage has its reason. Let the plate and dishes be pewter, wood, or earth; my meat be boiled or roasted; let them give me butter or oil, of nuts or olives, hot or cold, ’tis all one to me; and so indifferent, that growing old, I accuse this generous faculty, and would wish that delicacy and choice should correct the indiscretion of my appetite, and sometimes soothe my stomach. When I have been abroad out of France, and that people, out of courtesy, have asked me if I would be served after the French manner, I laughed at the question, and always frequented tables the most filled with foreigners. I am ashamed to see our countrymen besotted with this foolish humor of quarrelling with forms contrary to their own; they seem to be out of their element when out of their own village: wherever they go, they keep to their own fashions and abominate those of strangers. Do they meet with a compatriot in Hungary? O the happy chance! They are thenceforward inseparable; they cling together, and their whole discourse is to condemn the barbarous manners they see about them. Why barbarous, because they are not French? And those have made the best use of their travels who have observed most to speak against. Most of them go for no other end but to come back again: they proceed in their travel with vast gravity and circumspection, with a silent and incommunicable prudence, preserving themselves from the contagion of an unknown air. What I am saying of them puts me in mind of something like it I have at times observed in some of our young courtiers; they will not mix with any but men of their own sort, and look upon us as men of another world, with disdain or pity. Put them upon any discourse but the intrigues of the court, and they are utterly at a loss; as very owls and novices to us as we are to them. ’Tis truly said that a well-bred man is a compound man. I, on the contrary, travel very much sated with our own fashions; I do not look for Gascons in Sicily; I have left enough of them at home; I rather seek for Greeks and Persians; they are the men I endeavor to be acquainted with and

the men I study; 'tis there that I bestow and employ myself. And which is more, I fancy that I have met but with few customs that are not as good as our own; I have not, I confess, travelled very far; scarce out of the sight of the vanes of my own house.

As to the rest, most of the accidental company a man falls into upon the road beget him more trouble than pleasure; I waive them as much as I civilly can, especially now that age seems in some sort to privilege and sequester me from the common forms. You suffer for others or others suffer for you; both of them inconveniences of importance enough, but the latter appears to me the greater. 'Tis a rare fortune, but of inestimable solace, to have a worthy man, one of a sound judgment and of manners conformable to your own, who takes a delight to bear you company. I have been at an infinite loss for such upon my travels. But such a companion should be chosen and acquired from your first setting out. There can be no pleasure to me without communication: there is not so much as a sprightly thought comes into my mind, that it does not grieve me to have produced alone, and that I have no one to communicate it to:—

> *"If wisdom be conferred with this reservation, that I must keep it to myself, and not communicate it to others, I would none of it."*

This other has strained it one note higher:—

> *"If such a condition of life should happen to a wise man, that in the greatest plenty of all conveniences he might, at the most undisturbed leisure, consider and contemplate all things worth the knowing, yet if his solitude be such that he must not see a man, let him depart from life."*

Architas pleases me when he says, "that it would be unpleasant, even in heaven itself, to wander in those great and divine celestial bodies without a companion." But yet 'tis much better to be alone than in foolish and troublesome company. Aristippus loved to live as a stranger in all places:—

> *"If the fates would let me live in my own way,"*

I should choose to pass away the greatest part of my life on horseback:—

> *"Visit the regions where the sun burns, where are the thick rainclouds and the frosts."*

"Have you not more easy diversions at home? What do you there want? Is not your house situated in a sweet and healthful air, sufficiently furnished, and more than sufficiently large? Has not the royal majesty been

more than once there entertained with all its train? Are there not more below your family in good ease than there are above it in eminence? Is there any local, extraordinary, indigestible thought that afflicts you?"

"That may now worry you, and vex, fixed in your breast."

"Where do you think to live without disturbance?"

"Fortune is never simply complaisant."

You see, then, it is only you that trouble yourself; you will everywhere follow yourself, and everywhere complain; for there is no satisfaction here below, but either for brutish or for divine souls. He who, on so just an occasion, has no contentment, where will he think to find it? How many thousands of men terminate their wishes in such a condition as yours? Do but reform yourself; for that is wholly in your own power! whereas you have no other right but patience towards fortune:—

"There is no tranquillity but that which reason has conferred."

I see the reason of this advice, and see it perfectly well; but he might sooner have done, and more pertinently, in bidding me in word be wise; that resolution is beyond wisdom; 'tis her precise work and product. Thus the physician keeps preaching to a poor languishing patient to "be cheerful;" but he would advise him a little more discreetly in bidding him "be well." For my part, I am but a man of the common sort. 'Tis a wholesome precept, certain and easy to be understood, "Be content with what you have," that is to say, with reason: and yet to follow this advice is no more in the power of the wise men of the world than in me. 'Tis a common saying, but of a terrible extent: what does it not comprehend? All things fall under discretion and qualification. I know very well that, to take it by the letter, this pleasure of travelling is a testimony of uneasiness and irresolution, and, in sooth, these two are our governing and predominating qualities. Yes, I confess, I see nothing, not so much as in a dream, in a wish, whereon I could set up my rest: variety only, and the possession of diversity, can satisfy me; that is, if anything can. In travelling, it pleases me that I may stay where I like, without inconvenience, and that I have a place wherein commodiously to divert myself. I love a private life, because 'tis my own choice that I love it, not by any dissenting from or dislike of public life, which, peradventure, is as much according to my complexion. I serve my prince more cheerfully because it is by the free election of my own judgment and reason, without any particular obligation; and that I am not reduced and constrained so to do for being rejected or disliked by the other

party; and so of all the rest. I hate the morsels that necessity carves me; any commodity upon which I had only to depend would have me by the throat:—

"Let me have one oar in the water, and with the other rake the shore;"

one cord will never hold me fast enough. You will say, there is vanity in this way of living. But where is there not? All these fine precepts are vanity, and all wisdom is vanity:—

"The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain."

These exquisite subtleties are only fit for sermons; they are discourses that will send us all saddled into the other world. Life is a material and corporal motion, an action imperfect and irregular of its own proper essence; I make it my business to serve it according to itself:—

"We each of us suffer our own particular demon."

"We must so order it as by no means to contend against universal nature; but yet, that rule being observed, to follow our own."

To what end are these elevated points of philosophy, upon which no human being can rely? and those rules that exceed both our use and force?

I see often that we have theories of life set before us which neither the proposer nor those who hear him have any hope, nor, which is more, any inclination to follow. Of the same sheet of paper whereon the judge has but just written a sentence against an adulterer, he steals a piece whereon to write a love-letter to his companion's wife. She whom you have but just now illicitly embraced will presently, even in your own hearing, more loudly inveigh against the same fault in her companion than a Portia would do; and men there are who will condemn others to death for crimes that they themselves do not repute so much as faults. I have, in my youth, seen a man of good rank with one hand present to the people verses that excelled both in wit and debauchery, and with the other, at the same time, the most ripe and pugnacious theological reformation that the world has been treated withal these many years. And so men proceed; we let the laws and precepts follow their way; ourselves keep another course, not only from debauchery of manners, but oftimes by judgment and contrary opinion. Do but hear a philosophical lecture; the invention, eloquence, pertinency immediately strike upon your mind and move you; there is nothing that touches or stings your conscience; 'tis not to this they address themselves. Is not this true? It made Aristo say, that neither a bath nor a lecture did aught unless it scoured

and made men clean? One may stop at the skin; but it is after the marrow is picked out: as, after we have swallowed good wine out of a fine cup, we examine the designs and workmanship. In all the courts of ancient philosophy, this is to be found, that the same teacher publishes rules of temperance and at the same time lessons in love and wantonness; Xenophon, in the very bosom of Clinias, wrote against the Aristippic virtue. 'Tis not that there is any miraculous conversion in it that makes them thus wavering; 'tis that Solon represents himself, sometimes in his own person, and sometimes in that of a legislator; one while he speaks for the crowd, and another for himself; taking the free and natural rules for his own share, feeling assured of a firm and entire health:—

"Desperate maladies require the best doctors."

Antisthenes allows a sage to love, and to do whatever he thinks convenient, without regard to the laws, forasmuch as he is better advised than they, and has a greater knowledge of virtue. His disciple Diogenes said, that "men to perturbations were to oppose reason: to fortune, courage: to the laws, nature." For tender stomachs, constrained and artificial recipes must be prescribed: good and strong stomachs serve themselves simply with the prescriptions of their own natural appetite; after this manner do our physicians proceed, who eat melons and drink iced wines, whilst they confine their patients to syrups and sops. "I know not," said the courtezan Lais, "these books, this wisdom, this philosophy; but these men knock as often at my door as any others." At the same rate that our license carries us beyond what is lawful and allowed, men have, often beyond universal reason, stretched the precepts and rules of our life:—

"No one thinks he does you as much ill as you may suffer him."

It were to be wished that there was more proportion betwixt the command and the obedience; and the mark seems to be unjust to which one cannot attain. There is no so good man, who so squares all his thoughts and actions to the laws, that he is not faulty enough to deserve hanging ten times in his life; and he may well be such a one, as it were great injustice and great harm to punish and ruin:—

"Olus, what is it to thee what he or he does with his skin?"

and such a one there may be, who has no way offended the laws, who, nevertheless, would not deserve the character of a virtuous man, and whom philosophy would justly condemn to be whipped; so unequal and perplexed is this relation. We are so far from being good men, according to the laws of

God, that we cannot be so according to our own: human wisdom never yet arrived at the duties it had itself prescribed; and could it arrive there, it would still prescribe to itself others beyond, to which it would ever aspire and pretend; so great an enemy to consistency is our human condition. Man enjoins himself to be necessarily in fault: he is not very discreet to cut out his own duty by the measure of another being than his own. To whom does he prescribe that which he does not expect any one should perform? is he unjust in not doing what it is impossible for him to do? The laws which condemn us not to be able, condemn us for not being able.

At the worst, this difform liberty of presenting ourselves two several ways, the actions after one manner and the reasoning after another, may be allowed to those who only speak of things; but it cannot be allowed to those who speak of themselves, as I do: I must march my pen as I do my feet. Common life ought to have relation to the other lives: the virtue of Cato was vigorous beyond the reason of the age he lived in; and for a man who made it his business to govern others, a man dedicated to the public service, it might be called a justice, if not unjust, at least vain and out of season. Even my own manners, which differ not above an inch from those current amongst us, render me, nevertheless, a little rough and unsociable at my age. I know not whether it be without reason that I am disgusted with the world I frequent; but I know very well that it would be without reason, should I complain of its being disgusted with me, seeing I am so with it. The virtue that is assigned to the affairs of the world is a virtue of many wavings, corners, and elbows, to join and adapt itself to human frailty, mixed and artificial, not straight, clear, constant, nor purely innocent. Our annals to this very day reproach one of our kings for suffering himself too simply to be carried away by the conscientious persuasions of his confessor: affairs of state have bolder precepts:—

"Let him who will be pious retire from the court."

I formerly tried to employ in the service of public affairs opinions and rules of living, as rough, new, unpolished or unpolluted, as they were either born with me, or brought away from my education, and wherewith I serve my own turn, if not so commodiously, at least securely, in my own particular concerns: a scholastic and novice virtue; but I have found them unapt and dangerous. He who goes into a crowd must now go one way and then another, keep his elbows close, retire or advance, and quit the straight way, according to what he encounters; and must live not so much according

to his own method as to that of others; not according to what he proposes to himself, but according to what is proposed to him, according to the time, according to the men, according to the occasions. Plato says, that whoever escapes from the world's handling with clean breeches, escapes by miracle: and says withal, that when he appoints his philosopher the head of a government, he does not mean a corrupt one like that of Athens, and much less such a one as this of ours, wherein wisdom itself would be to seek. A good herb, transplanted into a soil contrary to its own nature, much sooner conforms itself to the soil than it reforms the soil to it. I find that if I had wholly to apply myself to such employments, it would require a great deal of change and new modelling in me before I could be any way fit for it. And though I could so far prevail upon myself (and why might I not with time and diligence work such a feat), I would not do it. The little trial I have had of public employment has been so much disgust to me; I feel at times temptations toward ambition rising in my soul, but I obstinately oppose them:—

"But thou, Catullus, be obstinately firm."

I am seldom called to it, and as seldom offer myself uncalled; liberty and laziness, the qualities most predominant in me, are qualities diametrically contrary to that trade. We cannot well distinguish the faculties of men; they have divisions and limits hard and delicate to choose; to conclude from the discreet conduct of a private life a capacity for the management of public affairs is to conclude ill; a man may govern himself well who cannot govern others so, and compose Essays who could not work effects: men there may be who can order a siege well, who would ill marshal a battle; who can speak well in private, who would ill harangue a people or a prince; nay, 'tis peradventure rather a testimony in him who can do the one that he cannot do the other, than otherwise. I find that elevated souls are not much more proper for mean things than mean souls are for high ones. Could it be imagined that Socrates should have administered occasion of laughter, at the expense of his own reputation, to the Athenians for having never been able to sum up the votes of his tribe, to deliver it to the council? Truly, the veneration I have for the perfections of this great man deserves that his fortune should furnish, for the excuse of my principal imperfections, so magnificent an example. Our sufficiency is cut out into small parcels; mine has no latitude, and is also very contemptible in number. Saturninus, to those who had conferred upon him the command in

chief: “Companions,” said he, “you have lost a good captain, to make of him a bad general.”

Whoever boasts, in so sick a time as this, to employ a true and sincere virtue in the world’s service, either knows not what it is, opinions growing corrupt with manners (and, in truth, to hear them describe it, to hear the most of them glorify themselves in their deportments, and lay down their rules; instead of painting virtue, they paint pure vice and injustice, and so represent it false in the education of princes); or if he does know it, boasts unjustly and let him say what he will, does a thousand things of which his own conscience must necessarily accuse him. I should willingly take Seneca’s word on the experience he made upon the like occasion, provided he would deal sincerely with me. The most honorable mark of goodness in such a necessity is freely to confess both one’s own faults and those of others; with the power of its virtue to stay one’s inclination towards evil; unwillingly to follow this propension; to hope better, to desire better. I perceive that in these divisions wherein we are involved in France, every one labors to defend his cause; but even the very best of them with dissimulation and disguise: he who would write roundly of the true state of the quarrel, would write rashly and wrongly. The most just party is at best but a member of a decayed and worm-eaten body; but of such a body, the member that is least affected calls itself sound, and with good reason, forasmuch as our qualities have no title but in comparison, civil innocence is measured according to times and places. Imagine this in Xenophon, related as a fine commendation of Agesilaus: that, being entreated by a neighboring prince with whom he had formerly had war, to permit him to pass through his country, he granted his request, giving him free passage through Peloponnesus; and not only did not imprison or poison him, being at his mercy, but courteously received him according to the obligation of his promise, without doing him the least injury or offence. To such ideas as theirs this were an act of no especial note; elsewhere and in another age, the frankness and unanimity of such an action would be thought wonderful; our monkeyish capets would have laughed at it, so little does the Spartan innocence resemble that of France. We are not without virtuous men, but ’tis according to our notions of virtue. Whoever has his manner established in regularity above the standard of the age he lives in, let him either wrest or blunt his rules, or, which I would rather advise him to, let him retire, and not meddle with us at all. What will he get by it?—

"If I see an exemplary and good man, I liken it to a two-headed boy, or a fish turned up by the plough, or a teeming mule."

One may regret better times, but cannot fly from the present; we may wish for other magistrates, but we must, notwithstanding, obey those we have; and, peradventure, 'tis more laudable to obey the bad than the good. So long as the image of the ancient and received laws of this monarchy shall shine in any corner of the kingdom, there will I be. If they unfortunately happen to thwart and contradict one another, so as to produce two parts, of doubtful and difficult choice, I will willingly choose to withdraw and escape the tempest; in the meantime nature or the hazards of war may lend me a helping hand. Betwixt Caesar and Pompey, I should frankly have declared myself; but, as amongst the three robbers who came after, a man must have been necessitated either to hide himself, or have gone along with the current of the time, which I think one may fairly do when reason no longer guides:—

"Whither dost thou run wandering?"

This medley is a little from my theme; I go out of my way; but 'tis rather by license than oversight; my fancies follow one another, but sometimes at a great distance, and look towards one another, but 'tis with an oblique glance. I have read a dialogue of Plato, of the like motley and fantastic composition, the beginning about love, and all the rest to the end about rhetoric: they fear not these variations, and have a marvellous grace in letting themselves be carried away at the pleasure of the wind, or at least to seem as if they were. The titles of my chapters do not always comprehend the whole matter; they often denote it by some mark only, as these others, Andria, Eunuchus; or these, Sylla, Cicero, Torquatus. I love a poetic progress, by leaps and skips; 'tis an art, as Plato says, light, nimble, demoniac. There are pieces in Plutarch where he forgets his theme; where the proposition of his argument is only found by incidence, stuffed and half stifled in foreign matter. Observe his footsteps in the Daemon of Socrates. O God! how beautiful are these frolicsome sallies, those variations and digressions, and all the more when they seem most fortuitous and careless. 'Tis the indiligent reader who loses my subject, and not I; there will always be found some word or other in a corner that is to the purpose, though it lie very close. I ramble indiscreetly and tumultuously; my style and my wit wander at the same rate. He must fool it a little who would not be deemed wholly a fool, say both the precepts, and, still more, the examples of our

masters. A thousand poets flag and languish after a prosaic manner; but the best old prose (and I strew it here up and down indifferently for verse) shines throughout with the lustre, vigor, and boldness of poetry, and not without some air of its fury. And certainly prose ought to have the pre-eminence in speaking. The poet, says Plato, seated upon the muses' tripod, pours out with fury whatever comes into his mouth, like the pipe of a fountain, without considering and weighing it; and things escape him of various colors, of contrary substance, and with an irregular torrent. Plato himself is throughout poetical; and the old theology, as the learned tell us, is all poetry; and the first philosophy is the original language of the gods. I would have my matter distinguish itself; it sufficiently shows where it changes, where it concludes, where it begins, and where it rejoins, without interlacing it with words of connection introduced for the relief of weak or negligent ears, and without explaining myself. Who is he that had not rather not be read at all than after a drowsy or cursory manner?

"Nothing is so useful as that which is cursorily so."

If to take books in hand were to learn them: to look upon them were to consider them: and to run these slightly over were to grasp them, I were then to blame to make myself out so ignorant as I say I am. Seeing I cannot fix the attention of my reader by the weight of what I write, manco male, if I should chance to do it by my intricacies. "Nay, but he will afterwards repent that he ever perplexed himself about it." 'Tis very true, but he will yet be there perplexed. And, besides, there are some humors in which comprehension produces disdain; who will think better of me for not understanding what I say, and will conclude the depth of my sense by its obscurity; which, to speak in good sooth, I mortally hate, and would avoid it if I could. Aristotle boasts somewhere in his writings that he affected it: a vicious affectation. The frequent breaks into chapters that I made my method in the beginning of my book, having since seemed to me to dissolve the attention before it was raised, as making it disdain to settle itself to so little, I, upon that account, have made them longer, such as require proposition and assigned leisure. In such an employment, to whom you will not give an hour you give nothing; and you do nothing for him for whom you only do it whilst you are doing something else. To which may be added that I have, peradventure, some particular obligation to speak only by halves, to speak confusedly and discordantly. I am therefore angry at this trouble-feast reason, and its extravagant projects that worry one's life, and

its opinions, so fine and subtle, though they be all true, I think too dear bought and too inconvenient. On the contrary, I make it my business to bring vanity itself in repute, and folly too, if it produce me any pleasure; and let myself follow my own natural inclinations, without carrying too strict a hand upon them.

I have seen elsewhere houses in ruins, and statues both of gods and men: these are men still. 'Tis all true; and yet, for all that, I cannot so often revisit the tomb of that so great and so puissant city, that I do not admire and reverence it. The care of the dead is recommended to us; now, I have been bred up from my infancy with these dead; I had knowledge of the affairs of Rome long before I had any of those of my own house; I knew the Capitol and its plan before I knew the Louvre, and the Tiber before I knew the Seine. The qualities and fortunes of Lucullus, Metellus, and Scipio have ever run more in my head than those of any of my own country; they are all dead; so is my father as absolutely dead as they, and is removed as far from me and life in eighteen years as they are in sixteen hundred: whose memory, nevertheless, friendship and society, I do not cease to embrace and utilize with a perfect and lively union. Nay, of my own inclination, I pay more service to the dead; they can no longer help themselves, and therefore, methinks, the more require my assistance: 'tis there that gratitude appears in its full lustre. The benefit is not so generously bestowed, where there is retrogradation and reflection. Arcesilaus, going to visit Ctesibius, who was sick, and finding him in a very poor condition, very finely conveyed some money under his pillow, and, by concealing it from him, acquitted him, moreover, from the acknowledgment due to such a benefit. Such as have merited from me friendship and gratitude have never lost these by being no more; I have better and more carefully paid them when gone and ignorant of what I did; I speak most affectionately of my friends when they can no longer know it. I have had a hundred quarrels in defending Pompey and for the cause of Brutus; this acquaintance yet continues betwixt us; we have no other hold even on present things but by fancy. Finding myself of no use to this age, I throw myself back upon that other, and am so enamored of it, that the free, just, and flourishing state of that ancient Rome (for I neither love it in its birth nor its old age) interests and impassionates me; and therefore I cannot so often revisit the sites of their streets and houses, and thouse ruins profound even to the Antipodes, that I am not interested in them. Is it by nature, or through error of fancy, that the sight of places which we know to

have been frequented and inhabited by persons whose memories are recommended in story, moves us in some sort more than to hear a recital of their acts or to read their writings?—

"So great a power of reminiscence resides in places; and that truly in this city infinite, for which way soever we go, we find the traces of some story."

It pleases me to consider their face, bearing, and vestments: I pronounce those great names betwixt my teeth, and make them ring in my ears:—

"I reverence them, and always rise to so great names."

Of things that are in some part great and admirable, I admire even the common parts: I could wish to see them in familiar relations, walk, and sup. It were ingratitude to contemn the relics and images of so many worthy and valiant men as I have seen live and die, and who, by their example, give us so many good instructions, knew we how to follow them.

And, moreover, this very Rome that we now see, deserves to be beloved, so long and by so many titles allied to our crown; the only common and universal city; the sovereign magistrate that commands there is equally acknowledged elsewhere: 'tis the metropolitan city of all the Christian nations: the Spaniard and Frenchman is there at home: to be a prince of that state, there needs no more but to be of Christendom wheresoever. There is no place upon earth that heaven has embraced with such an influence and constancy of favor; her very ruins are grand and glorious:—

"More precious from her glorious ruins,"

she yet in her very tomb retains the marks and images of empire:—

"That it may be manifest that there is in one place the work of rejoicing nature."

Some would blame and be angry at themselves to perceive themselves tickled with so vain a pleasure: our humors are never too vain that are pleasant: let them be what they may, if they constantly content a man of common understanding, I could not have the heart to blame him.

I am very much obliged to Fortune, in that, to this very hour, she has offered me no outrage beyond what I was well able to bear. Is it not her custom to let those live in quiet by whom she is not importuned?—

"The more each man denies himself, the more the gods give him. Poor as I am, I seek the company of those who ask nothing; they who

desire much will be deficient in much."

If she continue her favor, she will dismiss me very well satisfied:—

"I trouble the gods no farther."

But beware a shock: there are a thousand who perish in the port. I easily comfort myself for what shall here happen when I shall be gone; present things trouble me enough:—

"I leave the rest to fortune."

Besides, I have not that strong obligation that they say ties men to the future, by the issue that succeeds to their name and honor; and peradventure, ought less to covet them, if they are to be so much desired. I am but too much tied to the world, and to this life, of myself: I am content to be in Fortune's power by circumstances properly necessary to my being, without otherwise enlarging her jurisdiction over me; and have never thought that to be without children was a defect that ought to render life less complete or less contented: a sterile vocation has its conveniences too. Children are of the number of things that are not so much to be desired, especially now that it would be so hard to make them good:—

"Nothing good can be born now, the seed is so corrupt;"

and yet they are justly to be lamented by such as lose them when they have them.

He who left me my house in charge foretold that I was like to ruin it, considering my humor so little inclined to look after household affairs. But he was mistaken; for I am in the same condition now as when I first entered into it, or rather somewhat better; and yet without office or any place of profit.

As to the rest, if Fortune has never done me any violent or extraordinary injury, neither has she done me any particular favor; whatever we derive from her bounty, was there above a hundred years before my time: I have, as to my own particular, no essential and solid good, that I stand indebted for to her liberality. She has, indeed, done me some airy favors, honorary and titular favors, without substance, and those in truth she has not granted, but offered me, who, God knows, am all material, and who take nothing but what is real, and indeed massive too, for current pay: and who, if I durst confess so much, should not think avarice much less excusable than ambition; nor pain less to be avoided than shame; nor health less to be coveted than learning, or riches than nobility.

Amongst those empty favors of hers, there is none that so much pleases vain humor natural to my country, as an authentic bull of a Roman burgess-ship, that was granted me when I was last there, glorious in seals and gilded letters, and granted with all gracious liberality. And because ’tis couched in a mixed style, more or less favorable, and that I could have been glad to have seen a copy of it before it had passed the seal, I will, to satisfy such as are sick of the same curiosity I am, transcribe it here in its exact form:—

- “On the Report made to the Senate by
- Orazio Massimi, Marzo Cecio, Alessan-
- dro Muti, Conservators of the city of
- Rome, concerning the right of Roman
- citizenship to be granted to the most
- illustrious Michael de Montaigne,
- knight of the Order of St. Michael, and
- gentleman of the chamber in ordinary
- to the most Christian King, the Senate
- and people of Rome have decreed:—

“Considering that by ancient usage, those have ever been adopted amongst us with ardor and eagerness, who, distinguished in virtue and nobility, have served and honored our republic, or might do so in the future; we, full of respect for the example and authority of our ancestors, consider that we should imitate and follow this laudable custom. Wherefore, the most illustrious Michael de Montaigne, knight of the Order of St. Michael, and gentleman of the chamber in ordinary to the most Christian King, most zealous for the Roman name, being by the rank and distinction of his family, and by his personal qualities, highly worthy to be admitted to the rights of Roman citizenship by the supreme judgment and suffrage of the senate and people of Rome: it has pleased the senate and people of Rome, that the most illustrious Michael de Montaigne, adorned with every species of merit, and very dear to this noble people, should be inscribed as a Roman citizen, both in regard to himself and to his posterity, and admitted to enjoy all the honors and advantages reserved for those who were born citizens and patricians of Rome, or who have become such by right of their good title thereunto. And herein the senate and people of Rome consider that they are

less conferring a gift than paying a debt, and that it is less a service they render than a service they receive from him, who, in accepting this citizenship, honors and gives lustre to the city itself. The Conservators have caused this Senatus-Consultus to be transcribed by the Secretaries of the Roman senate and people, to be deposited among the archives of the Capitol, and have drawn up this Act, sealed with the common seal of the city, A. U. C. 2331, A.C. 1581, 13th March.

"ORAZIO FOSCO,

"Secretary of the Sacred Senate and of the Roman People.

"VINCENTE MARTOLI,

"Secretary of the Sacred Senate and of the Roman People."

Being before burgess of no city at all, I am glad to be created one of the most noble that ever was or ever shall be. If other men would consider themselves at the rate I do, they would, as I do, discover themselves to be full of inanity and foppery; to rid myself of it, I cannot, without making myself away. We are all steeped in it, as well one as another; but they who are not aware on't, have somewhat the better bargain; and yet I know not whether they have or no.

This opinion and common usage to observe others more than ourselves has very much relieved us that way: 'tis a very displeasing object: we can there see nothing but misery and vanity: nature, that we may not be dejected with the sight of our own deformities, has wisely thrust the action of seeing outward. We go forward with the current, but to turn back towards ourselves is a painful motion; so is the sea moved and troubled when the waves rush against one another. Observe, says every one, the motions of the heavens, of public affairs; observe the quarrel of such a person, take notice of such a one's pulse, of such another's last will and testament; in sum, be always looking high or low, on one side, before or behind you. It was a paradoxical command anciently given us by that god of Delphi: "Look into yourself; discover yourself; keep close to yourself; call back your mind and will, that elsewhere consume themselves into yourself; you run out, you spill yourself; carry a more steady hand: men betray you, men spill you, men steal you from yourself." Dost thou not see that this world we live in keeps all its sight confined within, and its eyes open to contemplate itself? 'Tis always vanity for thee, both within and without; but 'tis less vanity when less extended. Excepting thee, O man, said that god, everything studies itself first, and has bounds to its labors and desires, according to its

need. There is nothing so empty and necessitous as thou, who embracest the universe; thou art the investigator without knowledge, the magistrate without jurisdiction, and, after all, the fool of the farce.

OF MANAGING ONE'S WILL

FEW THINGS, in comparison of what commonly affect other men, move, or, to say better, possess me: for 'tis but reason they should concern a man, provided they do not possess him. I am very solicitous, both by study and argument, to enlarge this privilege of insensibility, which is in me naturally raised to a pretty degree, so that consequently I espouse and am very much moved with very few things. I have a clear sight enough, but I fix it upon very few objects; I have a sense delicate and tender enough; but an apprehension and application hard and negligent. I am very unwilling to engage myself; as much as in me lies, I employ myself wholly on myself, and even in that subject should rather choose to curb and restrain my affection from plunging itself over head and ears into it, it being a subject that I possess at the mercy of others, and over which fortune has more right than I; so that even as to health, which I so much value, 'tis all the more necessary for me not so passionately to covet and heed it, than to find diseases so insupportable. A man ought to moderate himself betwixt the hatred of pain and the love of pleasure: and Plato sets down a middle path of life betwixt the two. But against such affections as wholly carry me away from myself and fix me elsewhere, against those, I say, I oppose myself with my utmost power. 'Tis my opinion that a man should lend himself to others, and only give himself to himself. Were my will easy to lend itself out and to be swayed, I should not stick there; I am too tender both by nature and use:—

"Avoiding affairs and born to secure ease."

Hot and obstinate disputes, wherein my adversary would at last have the better, the issue that would render my heat and obstinacy disgraceful would peradventure vex me to the last degree. Should I set myself to it at the rate that others do, my soul would never have the force to bear the emotion and alarms of those who grasp at so much; it would immediately be disordered by this inward agitation. If, sometimes, I have been put upon the management of other men's affairs, I have promised to take them in hand, but not into my lungs and liver; to take them upon me, not to incorporate them; to take pains, yes: to be impassioned about it, by no means; I have a care of them, but I will not sit upon them. I have enough to do to order and govern the domestic throng of those that I have in my own

veins and bowels, without introducing a crowd of other men's affairs; and am sufficiently concerned about my own proper and natural business, without meddling with the concerns of others. Such as know how much they owe to themselves, and how many offices they are bound to of their own, find that nature has cut them out work enough of their own to keep them from being idle. "Thou hast business enough at home: look to that."

Men let themselves out to hire; their faculties are not for themselves, but for those to whom they have enslaved themselves; 'tis their tenants occupy them, not themselves. This common humor pleases not me. We must be thrifty of the liberty of our souls, and never let it out but upon just occasions, which are very few, if we judge aright. Do but observe such as have accustomed themselves to be at every one's call: they do it indifferently upon all, as well little as great, occasions; in that which nothing concerns them, as much as in what imports them most. They thrust themselves in indifferently wherever there is work to do and obligation, and are without life when not in tumultuous bustle:—

"They are in business for business' sake."

It is not so much that they will go, as it is that they cannot stand still: like a rolling stone that cannot stop till it can go no farther. Occupation, with a certain sort of men, is a mark of understanding and dignity: their souls seek repose in agitation, as children do by being rocked in a cradle; they may pronounce themselves as serviceable to their friends, as they are troublesome to themselves. No one distributes his money to others, but every one distributes his time and his life: there is nothing of which we are so prodigal as of these two things, of which to be thrifty would be both commendable and useful. I am of a quite contrary humor; I look to myself, and commonly covet with no great ardor what I do desire, and desire little; and I employ and busy myself at the same rate, rarely and temperately. Whatever they take in hand, they do it with their utmost will and vehemence. There are so many dangerous steps, that, for the more safety, we must a little lightly and superficially glide over the world, and not rush through it. Pleasure itself is painful in profundity:—

"You tread on fire, hidden under deceitful ashes."

Messieurs de Bordeaux chose me mayor of their city at a time when I was at a distance from France, and still more remote from any such thought. I entreated to be excused, but I was told by my friends that I had committed an error in so doing, and the greater because the king had, moreover,

interposed his command in that affair. ’Tis an office that ought to be looked upon so much more honorable, as it has no other salary nor advantage than the bare honor of its execution. It continues two years, but may be extended by a second election, which very rarely happens; it was to me, and had never been so but twice before: some years ago to Monsieur de Lansac, and lately to Monsieur de Biron, Marshal of France, in whose place I succeeded; and I left mine to Monsieur de Matignon, Marshal of France also: boastful of so noble an association:—

“Either one a good minister in peace and war.”

Fortune would have a hand in my promotion, by this particular circumstance which she put in of her own, not altogether vain; for Alexander disdained the ambassadors of Corinth, who came to offer him a burgess-ship of their city; but when they proceeded to lay before him that Bacchus and Hercules were also in the register, he graciously thanked them.

At my arrival, I faithfully and conscientiously represented myself to them for such as I find myself to be—a man without memory, without vigilance, without experience, and without vigor; but withal, without hatred, without ambition, without avarice, and without violence; that they might be informed of my qualities, and know what they were to expect from my service. And whereas the knowledge they had had of my late father, and the honor they had for his memory, had alone incited them to confer this favor upon me, I plainly told them that I should be very sorry anything should make so great an impression upon me as their affairs and the concerns of their city had made upon him, whilst he held the government to which they had preferred me. I remembered, when a boy, to have seen him in his old age cruelly tormented with these public affairs, neglecting the soft repose of his own house, to which the declension of his age had reduced him for several years before, the management of his own affairs, and his health; and certainly despising his own life, which was in great danger of being lost, by being engaged in long and painful journeys on their behalf. Such was he; and this humor of his proceeded from a marvellous good nature; never was there a more charitable and popular soul. Yet this proceeding which I commend in others, I do not love to follow myself, and am not without excuse.

Childhood of Bacchus. From painting by Joseph-Viktor Ranvier.

He had learned that a man must forget himself for his neighbor, and that the particular was of no manner of consideration in comparison with the general. Most of the rules and precepts of the world run this way; to drive us out of ourselves into the street for the benefit of public society; they thought to do a great feat to divert and remove us from ourselves, assuming we were but too much fixed there, and by a too natural inclination; and have said all they could to that purpose: for ’tis no new thing for the sages to preach things as they serve, not as they are. Truth has its obstructions, inconveniences, and incompatibilities with us; we must often deceive that we may not deceive ourselves; and shut our eyes and our understandings to redress and amend them:—

“For the ignorant judge, and therefore are oft to be deceived, lest they should err.”

When they order us to love three, four, or fifty degrees of things above ourselves, they do like archers, who, to hit the white, take their aim a great deal higher than the butt; to make a crooked stick straight, we bend it the contrary way.

I believe that in the Temple of Pallas, as we see in all other religions, there were apparent mysteries to be exposed to the people; and others, more secret and high, that were only to be shown to such as were professed; ’tis likely that in these the true point of friendship that every one owes to himself is to be found; not a false friendship, that makes us embrace glory, knowledge, riches, and the like, with a principal and immoderate affection, as members of our being; nor an indiscreet and effeminate friendship, wherein it happens, as with ivy, that it decays and ruins the walls it

embraces; but a sound and regular friendship, equally useful and pleasant. He who knows the duties of this friendship and practices them is truly of the cabinet of the Muses, and has attained to the height of human wisdom and of our happiness; such an one, exactly knowing what he owes to himself, will on his part find that he ought to apply to himself the use of the world and of other men; and to do this, to contribute to public society the duties and offices appertaining to him. He who does not in some sort live for others, does not live much for himself:—

"He who is his own friend, knows that he is a friend to everybody else."

The principal charge we have is, to every one his own conduct; and 'tis for this only that we here are. As he who should forget to live a virtuous and holy life, and should think he acquitted himself of his duty in instructing and training others up to it, would be a fool; even so he who abandons his own particular healthful and pleasant living to serve others therewith, takes, in my opinion, a wrong and unnatural course.

I would not that men should refuse, in the employments they take upon them, their attention, pains, eloquence, sweat, and blood if need be:—

"Himself not afraid to die for beloved friends, or for his country:"

but 'tis only borrowed, and accidentally; his mind being always in repose and in health; not without action, but without vexation, without passion. To be simply acting costs him so little, that he acts even sleeping; but it must be set on going with discretion; for the body receives the offices imposed upon it just according to what they are; the mind often extends and makes them heavier at its own expense, giving them what measure it pleases. Men perform like things with several sorts of endeavor, and different contention of will; the one does well enough without the other; for how many people hazard themselves every day in war without any concern which way it goes; and thrust themselves into the dangers of battles, the loss of which will not break their next night's sleep? and such a man may be at home, out of the danger which he durst not have looked upon, who is more passionately concerned for the issue of this war, and whose soul is more anxious about events than the soldier who therein stakes his blood and his life. I could have engaged myself in public employments without quitting my own matters a nail's breadth, and have given myself to others without abandoning myself. This sharpness and violence of desires more

hinder than they advance the execution of what we undertake; fill us with impatience against slow or contrary events, and with heat and suspicion against those with whom we have to do. We never carry on that thing well by which we are prepossessed and led:—

"Impulse manages all things ill."

He who therein employs only his judgment and address proceeds more cheerfully: he counterfeits, he gives way, he defers quite at his ease, according to the necessities of occasions; he fails in his attempt without trouble and affliction, ready and entire for a new enterprise; he always marches with the bridle in his hand. In him who is intoxicated with this violent and tyrannical intention, we discover, of necessity, much imprudence and injustice; the impetuosity of his desire carries him away; these are rash motions, and, if fortune do not very much assist, of very little fruit. Philosophy directs that, in the revenge of injuries received, we should strip ourselves of choler; not that the chastisement should be less, but, on the contrary, that the revenge may be the better and more heavily laid on, which, it conceives, will be by this impetuosity hindered. For anger not only disturbs, but, of itself, also wearies the arms of those who chastise; this fire benumbs and wastes their force; as in precipitation, festinatio tarda est,—haste trips up its own heels, fetters, and stops itself:—

"Ipsa se velocitas implicat."

For example, according to what I commonly see, avarice has no greater impediment than itself; the more bent and vigorous it is, the less it rakes together, and commonly sooner grows rich when disguised in a visor of liberality.

A very excellent gentleman, and a friend of mine, ran a risk of impairing his faculties by a too passionate attention and affection to the affairs of a certain prince his master; which master has thus portrayed himself to me; "that he foresees the weight of accidents as well as another, but that in those for which there is no remedy, he presently resolves upon suffering; in others, having taken all the necessary precautions which by the vivacity of his understanding he can presently do, he quietly awaits what may follow." And, in truth, I have accordingly seen him maintain a great indifferency and liberty of actions and serenity of countenance in very great and difficult affairs: I find him much greater, and of greater capacity in adverse than in prosperous fortune; his defeats are to him more glorious than his victories, and his mourning than his triumph.

Consider, that even in vain and frivolous actions, as at chess, tennis, and the like, this eager and ardent engaging with an impetuous desire, immediately throws the mind and members into indiscretion and disorder: a man astounds and hinders himself; he who carries himself more moderately both towards gain and loss, has always his wits about him; the less peevish and passionate he is at play, he plays much more advantageously and surely.

As to the rest, we hinder the mind's grasp and hold, in giving it so many things to seize upon; some things we should only offer to it; tie it to others, and with others incorporate it. It can feel and discern all things, but ought to feed upon nothing but itself; and should be instructed in what properly concerns itself, and that is properly of its own having and substance. The laws of nature teach us what justly we need. After the sages have told us that no one is indigent according to nature, and that every one is so according to opinion, they very subtly distinguish betwixt the desires that proceed from her, and those that proceed from the disorder of our own fancy: those of which we can see the end are hers; those that fly before us, and of which we can see no end, are our own: the poverty of goods is easily cured; the poverty of the soul is irreparable:—

> *"For if what is for man enough, could be enough, it were enough; but since it is not so, how can I believe that any wealth can give my mind content?"*

Socrates, seeing a great quantity of riches, jewels, and furniture carried in pomp through his town: "How many things," said he, "I do not desire!" Metrodorus lived on twelve ounces a-day, Epicurus upon less; Metrocles slept in winter abroad amongst sheep, in summer in the cloisters of churches:—

> *"Nature suffices for what he requires."*

Cleanthes lived by the labor of his own hands, and boasted that Cleanthes, if he would, could yet maintain another Cleanthes.

If that which nature exactly and originally requires of us for the conservation of our being be too little (as in truth what it is, and how good cheap life may be maintained, cannot be better expressed than by this consideration, that it is so little that by its littleness it escapes the gripe and shock of fortune), let us allow ourselves a little more; let us call every one of our habits and conditions nature; let us rate and treat ourselves by this measure; let us stretch our appurtenances and accounts so far; for so far, I fancy, we have some excuse. Custom is a second nature, and no less

powerful. What is wanting to my custom, I reckon is wanting to me; and I should be almost as well content that they took away my life as cut me short in the way wherein I have so long lived. I am no longer in condition for any great change, nor to put myself into a new and unwonted course, not even to augmentation. 'Tis past the time for me to become other than what I am; and as I should complain of any great good hap that should now befall me, that it came not in time to be enjoyed:—

"What is the good fortune to me, if it is not granted to me to use it?"

so should I complain of any inward acquisition. It were almost better never, than so late, to become an honest man, and well fit to live, when one has no longer to live. I, who am about to make my exit out of the world, would easily resign to any new-comer, who should desire it, all the prudence I am now acquiring in the world's commerce; after meat, mustard. I have no need of goods of which I can make no use; of what use is knowledge to him who has lost his head? 'Tis an injury and unkindness in fortune to tender us presents that will only inspire us with a just despite that we had them not in their due season. Guide me no more; I can no longer go. Of so many parts as make up a sufficiency, patience is the most sufficient. Give the capacity of an excellent treble to a chorister who has rotten lungs, and eloquence to a hermit exiled into the deserts of Arabia. There needs no art to help a fall; the end finds itself of itself at the conclusion of every affair. My world is at an end, my form expired; I am totally of the past, and am bound to authorize it, and to conform my outgoing to it. I will here declare, by way of example, that the Pope's late ten days' diminution has taken me so aback that I cannot well reconcile myself to it; I belong to the years wherein we kept another kind of account. So ancient and so long a custom challenges my adherence to it, so that I am constrained to be somewhat heretical on that point: incapable of any, though corrective, innovation. My imagination, in spite of my teeth, always pushes me ten days forward or backward, and is ever murmuring in my ears: "This rule concerns those who are to begin to be." If health itself, sweet as it is, returns to me by fits, 'tis rather to give me cause of regret than possession of it; I have no place left to keep it in. Time leaves me; without which nothing can be possessed. Oh, what little account should I make of those great elective dignities that I see in such esteem in the world, that are never conferred but upon men who are taking leave of it; wherein they do not so much regard

how well the man will discharge his trust, as how short his administration will be: from the very entry they look at the exit. In short, I am about finishing this man, and not rebuilding another. By long use, this form is in me turned into substance, and fortune into nature.

I say, therefore, that every one of us feeble creatures is excusable in thinking that to be his own which is comprised under this measure; but withal, beyond these limits, 'tis nothing but confusion; 'tis the largest extent we can grant to our own claims. The more we amplify our need and our possession, so much the more do we expose ourselves to the blows of Fortune and adversities. The career of our desires ought to be circumscribed and restrained to a short limit of the nearest and most contiguous commodities; and their course ought, moreover, to be performed not in a right line, that ends elsewhere, but in a circle, of which the two points, by a short wheel, meet and terminate in ourselves. Actions that are carried on without this reflection—a near and essential reflection, I mean—such as those of ambitious and avaricious men, and so many more as run point-blank, and to whose career always carries them before themselves, such actions, I say, are erroneous and sickly.

Most of our business is farce:—

"Mundus universus exercet histrionem."

We must play our part properly, but withal as a part of a borrowed personage; we must not make real essence of a mask and outward appearance; nor of a strange person, our own; we cannot distinguish the skin from the shirt: 'tis enough to meal the face, without mealing the breast. I see some who transform and transubstantiate themselves into as many new shapes and new beings as they undertake new employments; and who strut and fume even to the heart and liver, and carry their state along with them even to the close-stool: I cannot make them distinguish the salutations made to themselves from those made to their commission, their train, or their mule:—

"They so much give themselves up to fortune, as even to unlearn nature."

They swell and puff up their souls, and their natural way of speaking, according to the height of their magisterial place. The Mayors of Bordeaux and Montaigne have ever been two by very manifest separation. Because one is an advocate or a financier, he must not ignore the knavery there is in such callings; an honest man is not accountable for the vice or absurdity of

his employment, and ought not on that account refuse to take the calling upon him: ’tis the usage of his country, and there is money to be got by it; a man must live by the world, and make his best of it, such as it is. But the judgment of an emperor ought to be above his empire, and see and consider it as a foreign accident; and he ought to know how to enjoy himself apart from it, and to communicate himself as James and Peter, to himself, at all events.

I cannot engage myself so deep and so entire; when my will gives me to anything, ’tis not with so violent an obligation that my judgment is infected with it. In the present broils of this kingdom, my own interest has not made me blind to the laudable qualities of our adversaries, nor to those that are reproachable in those of men of our party. Others adore all of their own side; for my part, I do not so much as excuse most things in those of mine: a good work has never the worse grace with me for being made against me. The knot of the controversy excepted, I have always kept myself in equanimity and pure indifference:—

“Nor bear particular hatred beyond the necessities of war;”

for which I am pleased with myself; and the more because I see others commonly fail in the contrary direction. Such as extend their anger and hatred beyond the dispute in question, as most men do, show that they spring from some other occasion and private cause; like one who, being cured of an ulcer, has yet a fever remaining, by which it appears that the ulcer had another more concealed beginning. The reason is that they are not concerned in the common cause, because it is wounding to the state and general interest; but are only nettled by reason of their particular concern. This is why they are so especially animated, and to a degree so far beyond justice and public reason:—

“Every one was not so much angry against things in general, as against those that particularly concern himself.”

I would have the advantage on our side; but if it be not, I shall not run mad. I am heartily for the right party; but I do not want to be taken notice of as an especial enemy to others, and beyond the general quarrel. I marvellously challenge this vicious form of opinion:—“He is of the League because he admires the graciousness of Monsieur de Guise; he is astonished at the King of Navarre’s energy, therefore he is a Huguenot; he finds this to say of the manners of the king, he is therefore seditious in his heart.” And I did not grant to the magistrate himself that he did well in condemning a

book because it had placed a heretic amongst the best poets of the time. Shall we not dare to say of a thief that he has a handsome leg? If a woman be a strumpet, must it needs follow that she has a foul smell? Did they in the wisest ages revoke the proud title of Capitolinus they had before conferred on Marcus Manlius as conservator of religion and the public liberty, and stifle the memory of his liberality, his feats of arms, and military recompenses granted to his valor, because he afterwards aspired to the sovereignty, to the prejudice of the laws of his country? If we take a hatred against an advocate, he will not be allowed the next day to be eloquent. I have elsewhere spoken of the zeal that pushed on worthy men to the like faults. For my part, I can say, "Such a one does this thing ill, and another thing virtuously and well." So in the prognostication or sinister events of affairs they would have every one in his party blind or a blockhead, and that our persuasion and judgment should subserve not truth, but to the project of our desires. I should rather incline towards the other extreme; so much I fear being suborned by my desire; to which may be added that I am a little tenderly distrustful of things that I wish.

I have in my time seen wonders in the indiscreet and prodigious facility of people in suffering their hopes and belief to be led and governed, which way best pleased and served their leaders, despite a hundred mistakes one upon another, despite mere dreams and phantasms. I no more wonder at those who have been blinded and seduced by the fooleries of Apollonius and Mahomet. Their sense and understanding are absolutely taken away by their passion; their discretion has no more any other choice than that which smiles upon them and encourages their cause. I had principally observed this in the beginning of our intestine distempers; that other, which has sprung up since, in imitating, has surpassed it; by which I am satisfied that it is a quality inseparable from popular errors; after the first that rolls, opinions drive on one another like waves with the wind: a man is not a member of the body, if it be in his power to forsake it, and if he does not roll the common way. But, doubtless, they wrong the just side when they go about to assist it with fraud; I have ever been against that practice: 'tis only fit to work upon weak heads; for the sound, there are surer and more honest ways to keep up their courage and to excuse adverse accidents.

Heaven never saw a greater animosity than that betwixt Caesar and Pompey, nor ever shall; and yet I observe, methinks, in those brave souls, a great moderation towards one another: it was a jealousy of honor and

command, which did not transport them to a furious and indiscreet hatred, and was without malignity and detraction: in their hottest exploits upon one another, I discover some remains of respect and good-will; and am therefore of opinion that, had it been possible, each of them would rather have done his business without the ruin of the other than with it. Take notice how much otherwise matters went with Marius and Sylla.

We must not precipitate ourselves so headlong after our affections and interests. As, when I was young, I opposed myself to the progress of love which I perceived to advance too fast upon me, and had a care lest it should at last become so pleasing as to force, captivate, and wholly reduce me to its mercy: so I do the same upon all other occasions where my will is running on with too warm an appetite. I lean opposite to the side it inclines to, as I find it going to plunge and make itself drunk with its own wine; I evade nourishing its pleasure so far, that I cannot recover it without infinite loss. Souls that, through their own stupidity, only discern things by halves, have this happiness that they smart less with hurtful things: ’tis a spiritual leprosy that has some show of health, and such a health as philosophy does not altogether contemn; but yet we have no reason to call it wisdom, as we often do. And after this manner some one anciently mocked Diogenes, who, in the depth of winter and quite naked, went embracing an image of snow for a trial of his endurance: the other seeing him in this position, “Art thou now very cold?” said he. “Not at all,” replied Diogenes. “Why, then,” pursued the other, “what difficult and exemplary thing dost thou think thou doest in embracing that snow?” To take a true measure of constancy, one must necessarily know what the suffering is.

But souls that are to meet with adverse events and the injuries of fortune, in their depth and sharpness, that are to weigh and taste them according to their natural weight and bitterness, let such show their skill in avoiding the causes and diverting the blow. What did King Cotys do? He paid liberally for the rich and beautiful vessel that had been presented to him, but, seeing it was exceedingly brittle, he immediately broke it betimes, to prevent so easy a matter of displeasure against his servants. In like manner, I have willingly avoided all confusion in my affairs, and never coveted to have my estate contiguous to those of my relations, and such with whom I coveted a strict friendship; for thence matter of unkindness and falling out often proceeds. I formerly loved hazardous games of cards and dice; but have long since left them off, only for this reason that, with

whatever good air I carried my losses, I could not help feeling vexed within. A man of honor, who ought to be touchily sensible of the lie or of an insult, and who is not to take a scurvy excuse for satisfaction, should avoid occasions of dispute. I shun melancholy, crabbed men, as I would the plague; and in matters I cannot talk of without emotion and concern I never meddle, if not compelled by my duty:—

"They had better never to begin than to have to desist."

The surest way, therefore, is to prepare one's self beforehand for occasions.

I know very well that some wise men have taken another way, and have not feared to grapple and engage to the utmost upon several subjects: these are confident of their own strength, under which they protect themselves in all ill successes, making their patience wrestle and contend with disaster:—

> *"As a rock, which projects into the vast ocean, exposed to the furious winds and the raging sea, defies the force and menaces of sky and sea, itself unshaken."*

Let us not attempt these examples; we shall never come up to them. They set themselves resolutely, and without agitation, to behold the ruin of their country, which possessed and commanded all their will: this is too much, and too hard a task for our commoner souls. Cato gave up the noblest life that ever was upon this account; we meaner spirits must fly from the storm as far as we can; we must provide for sentiment, and not for patience, and evade the blows we cannot meet. Zeno, seeing Chremonides, a young man whom he loved, draw near to sit down by him, suddenly started up; and Cleanthes demanding of him the reason why he did so, "I hear," said he, "that physicians especially order repose, and forbid emotion in all tumors." Socrates does not say: "Do not surrender to the charms of beauty; stand your ground, and do your utmost to oppose it." "Fly it," says he; "shun the fight and encounter of it, as of a powerful poison that darts and wounds at a distance." And his good disciple, feigning or reciting, but, in my opinion, rather reciting than feigning, the rare perfections of the great Cyrus, makes him distrustful of his own strength to resist the charms of the divine beauty of that illustrious Panthea, his captive, and committing the visiting and keeping her to another, who could not have so much liberty as himself. And the Holy Ghost in like manner:—

"Lead us not into temptation."

We do not pray that our reason may not be combated and overcome by concupiscence, but that it should not be so much as tried by it; that we should not be brought into a state wherein we are so much as to suffer the approaches, solicitations, and temptations of sin: and we beg of Almighty God to keep our consciences quiet, fully and perfectly delivered from all commerce of evil.

Such as say that they have reason for their revenging passion, or any other sort of troublesome agitation of mind, often say true, as things now are, but not as they were: they speak to us when the causes of their error are by themselves nourished and advanced; but look backward—recall these causes to their beginning—and there you will put them to a nonplus. Will they have their faults less, for being of longer continuance; and that of an unjust beginning, the sequel can be just? Whoever shall desire the good of his country, as I do, without fretting or pining himself, will be troubled, but will not swoon to see it threatening either its own ruin, or a no less ruinous continuance; poor vessel, that the waves, the winds, and the pilot toss and steer to so contrary designs!—

- “In tam diversa magister
- Ventus et unda trahunt.”

He who does not gape after the favor of princes, as after a thing he cannot live without, does not much concern himself at the coldness of their reception and countenance, nor at the inconstancy of their wills. He who does not brood over his children or his honors with a slavish propension, ceases not to live commodiously enough after their loss. He who does good principally for his own satisfaction will not be much troubled to see men judge of his actions contrary to his merit. A quarter of an ounce of patience will provide sufficiently against such inconveniences. I find ease in this receipt, redeeming myself in the beginning as good cheap as I can; and find that by this means I have escaped much trouble and many difficulties. With very little ado I stop the first sally of my emotions, and leave the subject that begins to be troublesome before it transports me. He who stops not the start will never be able to stop the course; he who cannot keep them out will never get them out when they are once got in; and he who cannot arrive at the beginning will never arrive at the end of all. Nor will he bear the fall who cannot sustain the shock:—

"For they throw themselves headlong when once they lose their reason; and infirmity so far indulges itself, and from want of prudence is carried out into deep water, nor finds a place to shelter it."

I am betimes sensible of the little breezes that begin to sing and whistle within, forerunners of the storm:—

"As the breezes, pent in the woods, first send out dull murmurs, announcing the approach of winds to mariners."

How often have I done myself a manifest injustice to avoid the hazard of having yet a worse done me by the judges after an age of vexations, dirty and vile practices, more enemies to my nature than fire or the rack?—

"A man should abhor lawsuits as much as he may, and I know not whether not something more; for 'tis not only liberal, but sometimes also advantageous, too, a little to recede from one's right."

Were we wise, we ought to rejoice and boast, as I one day heard a young gentleman of a good family very innocently do, that his mother had lost her cause, as if it had been a cough, a fever, or something very troublesome to keep. Even the favors that fortune might have given me through relationship or acquaintance with those who have sovereign authority in those affairs, I have very conscientiously and very carefully avoided employing them to the prejudice of others, and of advancing my pretensions above their true right. In fine, I have so much prevailed by my endeavors (and happily I may say it) that I am to this day a virgin from all suits in law; though I have had very fair offers made me, and with very just title, would I have harkened to them, and a virgin from quarrels too. I have almost passed over a long life without any offence of moment, either active or passive, or without ever hearing a worse word than my own name: a rare favor of Heaven.

Our greatest agitations have ridiculous springs and causes: what ruin did our last Duke of Burgundy run into about a cartload of sheepskins! And was not the graving of a seal the first and principal cause of the greatest commotion that this machine of the world ever underwent? for Pompey and Caesar were but the offsets and continuation of the two others: and I have in my time seen the wisest heads in this kingdom assembled with great ceremony, and at the public expense, about treaties and agreements, of which the true decision, in the meantime, absolutely depended upon the ladies' cabinet council, and the inclination of some bit of a woman.

The poets very well understood this when they put all Greece and Asia to fire and sword about an apple. Look why that man hazards his life and honor upon the fortune of his rapier and dagger; let him acquaint you with the occasion of the quarrel; he cannot do it without blushing: the occasion is so idle and frivolous.

A little thing will engage you in it; but being once embarked, all the cords draw; great provisions are then required, more hard and more important. How much easier is it not to enter in than it is to get out? Now we should proceed contrary to the reed, which, at its first springing, produces a long and straight shoot, but afterwards, as if tired and out of breath, it runs into thick and frequent joints and knots, as so many pauses which demonstrate that it has no more its first vigor and firmness; 'twere better to begin gently and coldly, and to keep one's breath and vigorous efforts for the height and stress of the business. We guide affairs in their beginnings, and have them in our own power; but afterwards, when they are once at work, 'tis they that guide and govern us, and we are to follow them.

Yet do I not mean to say that this counsel has discharged me of all difficulty, and that I have not often had enough to do to curb and restrain my passions; they are not always to be governed according to the measure of occasions, and often have their entries very sharp and violent. But still good fruit and profit may thence be reaped; except for those who in well-doing are not satisfied with any benefit, if reputation be wanting; for, in truth, such an effect is not valued but by every one to himself; you are better contented, but not more esteemed, seeing you reformed yourself before you got into the whirl of the dance, or that the provocative matter was in sight. Yet not in this only, but in all other duties of life also, the way of those who aim at honor is very different from that they proceed by, who propose to themselves order and reason. I find some who rashly and furiously rush into the lists and cool in the course. As Plutarch says, that those who, through false shame, are soft and facile to grant whatever is desired of them, are afterwards as facile to break their word and to recant; so he who enters lightly into a quarrel is apt to go as lightly out of it. The same difficulty that keeps me from entering into it, would, when once hot and engaged in quarrel, incite me to maintain it with great obstinacy and resolution. 'Tis the tyranny of custom; when a man is once engaged, he must go through with it, or die. "Undertake coolly," said Bias, "but pursue with ardor." For want of prudence, men fall into want of courage, which is still more intolerable.

Most accommodations of the quarrels of these days of ours are shameful and false; we only seek to save appearances, and in the meantime betray and disavow our true intentions; we salve over the fact. We know very well how we said the thing, and in what sense we spoke it, and the company know it, and our friends whom we have wished to make sensible of our advantage, understand it well enough too: ’tis at the expense of our frankness and of the honor of our courage, that we disown our thoughts, and seek refuge in falsities, to make matters up. We give ourselves the lie, to excuse the lie we have given to another. You are not to consider if your word or action may admit of another interpretation; ’tis your own true and sincere interpretation, your real meaning in what you said or did, that you are thenceforward to maintain, whatever it cost you. Men speak to your virtue and conscience, which are not things to be put under a mask; let us leave these pitiful ways and expedients to the jugglers of the law. The excuses and reparations that I see every day made and given to repair indiscretion, seem to me more scandalous than the indiscretion itself. It were better to affront your adversary a second time than to offend yourself by giving him so unmanly a satisfaction. You have braved him in your heat and anger, and you would flatter and appease him in your cooler and better sense; and by that means lay yourself lower and at his feet, whom before you pretended to overtop. I do not find anything a gentleman can say so vicious in him as unsaying what he has said is infamous, when to unsay it is authoritatively extracted from him; forasmuch as obstinacy is more excusable in a man of honor than pusillanimity. Passions are as easy for me to evade, as they are hard for me to moderate:—

“They are more easily eradicated from the mind than governed.”

He who cannot attain the noble Stoical impassibility, let him secure himself in the bosom of this popular stolidity of mine; what they performed by virtue, I inure myself to do by temperament. The middle region harbors storms and tempests; the two extremes, of philosophers and peasants, concur in tranquility and happiness:—

> *“Happy is he who could discover the causes of things, and place under his feet all fears and inexorable fate, and the sound of rapacious Acheron: he is blest who knows the country gods, and Pan, and old Sylvanus, and the sister nymphs!”*

The births of all things are weak and tender; and therefore we should have our eyes intent on beginnings; for as when, in its infancy, the danger is

not perceived, so when it is grown up, the remedy is as little to be found. I had every day encountered a million of crosses, harder to digest in the progress of ambition, than it has been hard for me to curb the natural propension that inclined me to it:—

"I ever justly feared to raise my head too high."

All public actions are subject to uncertain and various interpretations; for too many heads judge of them. Some say of this civic employment of mine (and I am willing to say a word or two about it, not that it is worth so much, but to give an account of my manners in such things), that I have behaved myself in it as a man who is too supine and of a languid temperament; and they have some color for what they say. I endeavored to keep my mind and my thoughts in repose:—

"As being always quiet by nature, so also now by age;"

and if they sometimes lash out upon some rude and sensible impression, 'tis in truth without my advice. Yet from this natural heaviness of mine, men ought not to conclude a total inability in me (for want of care and want of sense are two very different things), and much less any unkindness or ingratitude towards that corporation who employed the utmost means they had in their power to oblige me, both before they knew me and after; and they did much more for me in choosing me anew than in conferring that honor upon me at first. I wish them all imaginable good; and assuredly had occasion been, there is nothing I would have spared for their service; I did for them as I would have done for myself. 'Tis a good, warlike, and generous people, but capable of obedience and discipline, and of whom the best use may be made, if well guided. They say also that my administration passed over without leaving any mark or trace. Good! They moreover accuse my cessation in a time when everybody almost was convicted of doing too much. I am impatient to be doing where my will spurs me on; but this itself is an enemy to perseverance. Let him who will make use of me according to my own way, employ me in affairs where vigor and liberty are required, where a direct, short, and, moreover, a hazardous conduct are necessary; I may do something; but if it must be long, subtle, laborious, artificial and intricate, he had better call in somebody else. All important offices are not necessarily difficult: I came prepared to do somewhat rougher work, had there been great occasion; for it is in my power to do something more than I do, or than I love to do. I did not, to my knowledge, omit anything that my duty really required. I easily

forgot those offices that ambition mixes with duty and palliates with its title; these are they that, for the most part, fill the eyes and ears, and give men the most satisfaction; not the thing but the appearance contents them; if they hear no noise, they think men sleep. My humor is no friend to tumult; I could appease a commotion without commotion, and chastise a disorder without being myself disorderly; if I stand in need of anger and inflammation, I borrow it, and put it on. My manners are languid, rather faint than sharp. I do not condemn a magistrate who sleeps, provided the people under his charge sleep as well as he: the laws in that case sleep too. For my part, I commend a gliding, staid, and silent life:—

"Neither subject and abject, nor obtrusive;"

my fortune will have it so. I am descended from a family that has lived without lustre or tumult, and, time out of mind, particularly ambitious of a character for probity.

Our people nowadays are so bred up to bustle and ostentation, that good nature, moderation, equability, constancy, and such like quiet and obscure qualities, are no more thought on or regarded. Rough bodies make themselves felt; the smooth are imperceptibly handled; sickness is felt, health little or not at all; no more than the oils that foment us, in comparison of the pains for which we are fomented. 'Tis acting for one's particular reputation and profit, not for the public good, to refer that to be done in the public squares which one may do in the council chamber; and to noonday what might have been done the night before; and to be jealous to do that himself which his colleague can do as well as he; so were some surgeons of Greece wont to perform their operations upon scaffolds in the sight of the people, to draw more practice and profit. They think that good rules cannot be understood but by the sound of trumpet. Ambition is not a vice of little people, nor of such modest means as ours. One said to Alexander: "Your father will leave you a great dominion, easy and pacific;" this youth was emulous of his father's victories and of the justice of his government; he would not have enjoyed the empire of the world in ease and peace. Alcibiades, in Plato, had rather die young, beautiful, rich, noble, and learned, and all this in full excellence, than to stop short of such condition; this disease is, peradventure, excusable, in so strong and so full a soul. When wretched and dwarfish little souls cajole and deceive themselves, and think to spread their fame for having given right judgment in an affair, or maintained the discipline of the guard of a gate of their city, the more they

think to exalt their heads the more they show their tails. This little well-doing has neither body nor life; it vanishes in the first mouth, and goes no further than from one street to another. Talk of it by all means to your son or your servant, like that old fellow who, having no other auditor of his praises nor approver of his valor, boasted to his chambermaid, crying, "O Perrete, what a brave, clever man hast thou for thy master!" At the worst, talk of it to yourself, like a councillor of my acquaintance, who, having disgorged a whole cartful of law jargon with great heat and as great folly, coming out of the council chamber to make water, was heard very complacently to mutter betwixt his teeth:—

"Not unto us, O Lord, not to us: but unto Thy name be the glory."

He who gets it of nobody else, let him pay himself out of his own purse.

Fame is not prostituted at so cheap a rate: rare and exemplary actions, to which it is due, would not endure the company of this prodigious crowd of petty daily performances. Marble may exalt your titles, as much as you please, for having repaired a rod of wall or cleansed a public sewer; but not men of sense. Renown does not follow all good deeds, if novelty and difficulty be not conjoined; nay, so much as mere esteem, according to the Stoics, is not due to every action that proceeds from virtue; nor will they allow him bare thanks who, out of temperance, abstains from an old blear-eyed crone. Those who have known the admirable qualities of Scipio Africanus, deny him the glory that Panaetius attributes to him, of being abstinent from gifts, as a glory not so much his as that of his age. We have pleasures suitable to our lot; let us not usurp those of grandeur: our own are more natural, and by so much more solid and sure, as they are lower. If not for that of conscience, yet at least for ambition's sake, let us reject ambition; let us disdain that thirst of honor and renown, so low and mendicant, that it makes us beg it of all sorts of people:—

"What praise is that which is to be got in the meat-market?"

by abject means, and at what cheap rate soever: 'tis dishonor to be so honored. Let us learn to be no more greedy, than we are capable, of glory. To be puffed up with every action that is innocent or of use, is only for those with whom such things are extraordinary and rare: they will value it as it costs them. The more a good effect makes a noise, the more do I abate of its goodness as I suspect that it was more performed for the noise, than upon account of the goodness: exposed upon the stall, 'tis half sold. Those

actions have much more grace and lustre, that slip from the hand of him that does them, negligently and without noise, and that some honest man thereafter finds out and raises from the shade, to produce it to the light upon its own account:—

> *"All things truly seem more laudable to me that are performed without ostentation, and without the testimony of the people,"*

says the most ostentatious man that ever lived.

I had but to conserve and to continue, which are silent and insensible effects: innovation is of great lustre; but 'tis interdicted in this age, when we are pressed upon and have nothing to defend ourselves from but novelties. To forbear doing is often as generous as to do; but 'tis less in the light, and the little good that I have in me is of this kind. In fine, occasions in this employment of mine have been confederate with my humor, and I heartily thank them for it. Is there any who desires to be sick, that he may see his physician at work? and would not that physician deserve to be whipped who should wish the plague amongst us, that he might put his art in practice? I have never been of that wicked humor, and common enough, to desire that troubles and disorders in this city should elevate and honor my government; I have ever heartily contributed all I could to their tranquillity and ease. He who will not thank me for the order, the sweet and silent calm that has accompanied my administration, cannot, however, deprive me of the share that belongs to me by title of my good fortune. And I am of such a composition, that I would as willingly be lucky as wise, and had rather owe my successes purely to the favor of Almighty God, than to any operation of my own. I had sufficiently published to the world my unfitness for such public offices; but I have something in me yet worse than incapacity itself; which is, that I am not much displeased at it, and that I do not much go about to cure it, considering the course of life that I have proposed to myself. Neither have I satisfied myself in this employment; but I have very near arrived at what I expected from my own performance, and have much surpassed what I promised them with whom I had to do: for I am apt to promise something less than what I am able to do, and than what I hope to make good. I assure myself that I have left no offence or hatred behind me; to leave regret or desire for me amongst them, I at least know very well that I never much aimed at it:—

> *"Dost thou bid me to ignore the face of this placid sea and the reposing waves? Dost thou bid me confide in this monster?"*

OF CRIPPLES

’TIS NOW two or three years ago that they made the year ten days shorter in France. How many changes may we expect should follow this reformation! it was really moving heaven and earth at once. Yet nothing for all that stirs from its place: my neighbors still find their seasons of sowing and reaping, the opportunities of doing their business, the hurtful and propitious days, just at the same time where they had, time out of mind, assigned them; there was no more error perceived in our old use, than there is amendment found in the alteration; so great an uncertainty there is throughout; so gross, obscure, and obtuse is our perception. ’Tis said that this regulation might have been carried on with less inconvenience, by subtracting for some years, according to the example of Augustus, the Bissextile, which is in some sort a day of impediment and trouble, till we had exactly satisfied this debt, the which itself is not done by this correction, and we yet remain some days in arrear: and yet, by this means, such order might be taken for the future, arranging that after the revolution of such or such a number of years, the supernumerary day might be always thrown out, so that we could not, henceforward, err above four-and-twenty hours in our computation. We have no other account of time but years; the world has for many ages made use of that only; and yet it is a measure that to this day we are not agreed upon, and one that we still doubt what form other nations have variously given to it, and what was the true use of it. What does this saying of some mean, that the heavens in growing old bow themselves down nearer towards us, and put us into an uncertainty even of hours and days? and that which Plutarch says of the months, that astrology had not in his time determined as to the motion of the moon; what a fine condition are we in to keep records of things past!

I was just now ruminating, as I often do, what a free and roving thing human reason is. I ordinarily see that men, in things propounded to them, more willingly study to find out reasons than to ascertain truth: they slip over presuppositions, but are curious in examination of consequences; they leave the things, and fly to the causes. Pleasant talkers! The knowledge of causes only concerns him who has the conduct of things; not us, who are merely to undergo them, and who have perfectly full and accomplished use of them, according to our need, without penetrating into the original and

essence; wine is none the more pleasant to him who knows its first faculties. On the contrary, both the body and the soul interrupt and weaken the right they have of the use of the world and of themselves, by mixing with it the opinion of learning; effects concern us, but the means not at all. To determine and to distribute appertain to superiority and command; as it does to subjection to accept. Let me reprehend our custom. They commonly begin thus: "How is such a thing done?" Whereas they should say, "Is such a thing done?" Our reason is able to create a hundred other worlds, and to find out the beginnings and contexture; it needs neither matter nor foundation: let it but run on, it builds as well in the air as on the earth, and with inanity as well as with matter:—

"Fit to give weight to smoke."

I find that almost throughout we should say, "there is no such thing," and should myself often make use of this answer, but I dare not: for they cry that it is an evasion produced from ignorance and weakness of understanding; and I am fain, for the most part, to juggle for company, and prate of frivolous subjects and tales that I believe never a word of; besides that, in truth, 'tis a little rude and quarrelsome flatly to deny a stated fact; and few people but will affirm, especially in things hard to be believed, that they have seen them, or at least will name witnesses whose authority will stop our mouths from contradiction. In this way, we know the foundations and means of things that never were; and the world scuffles about a thousand questions of which both the Pour and the Contre are false:—

"False things are so near the true, that a wise man should not trust himself in a precipitous place."

Truth and lies are faced alike; their port, taste, and proceedings are the same, and we look upon them with the same eye. I find that we are not only remiss in defending ourselves from deceit, but that we seek and offer ourselves to be gulled; we love to entangle ourselves in vanity, as a thing conformable to our being.

I have seen the birth of many miracles in my time; which, although they were abortive, yet have we not failed to foresee what they would have come to, had they lived their full age. 'Tis but finding the end of the clew, and a man may wind off as much as he will; and there is a greater distance betwixt nothing and the least thing in the world than there is betwixt this and the greatest. Now the first that are imbued with this beginning of novelty, when they set out with their tale, find, by the oppositions they meet

with, where the difficulty of persuasion lies, and so caulk up that place with some false piece; besides that:—

"Men having a natural desire to nourish reports,"

we naturally make a conscience of restoring what has been lent us, without some usury and accession of our own. The particular error first makes the public error, and afterwards, in turn, the public error makes the particular one; and thus all this vast fabric goes forming and piling itself up from hand to hand, so that the remotest witness knows more about it than those who were nearest, and the last informed is better persuaded than the first.

'Tis a natural progress; for whoever believes anything, thinks it a work of charity to persuade another into the same opinion; which the better to do, he will make no difficulty of adding as much of his own invention as he conceives necessary to his tale to encounter the resistance or want of conception he meets with in others. I myself, who make a great conscience of lying, and am not very solicitous of giving credit and authority to what I say, yet find that in the arguments I have in hand, being heated with the opposition of another, or by the proper warmth of my own narration, I swell and puff up my subject by voice, motion, vigor, and force of words, and moreover, by extension and amplification, not without some prejudice to the naked truth; but I do it conditionally withal, that to the first who brings me to myself, and who asks me the plain and bare truth, I presently surrender my passion, and deliver the matter to him without exaggeration, without emphasis, or any painting of my own. A quick and earnest way of speaking, as mine is, is apt to run into hyperbole. There is nothing to which men commonly are more inclined than to make way for their own opinions; where the ordinary means fails us, we add command, force, fire, and sword. 'Tis a misfortune to be at such a pass, that the best test of truth is the multitude of believers in a crowd, where the number of fools so much exceeds the wise:—

"As if anything were so common as ignorance."

"The multitude of fools is a protection to the wise."

'Tis hard to resolve a man's judgment against the common opinions: the first persuasion, taken from the very subject itself, possesses the simple, and from them diffuses itself to the wise, under the authority of the number and antiquity of the witnesses. For my part, what I should not believe from

one, I should not believe from a hundred and one: and I do not judge opinions by years.

'Tis not long since one of our princes, in whom the gout had spoiled an excellent nature and sprightly disposition, suffered himself to be so far persuaded with the report made to him of the marvellous operations of a certain priest who by words and gestures cured all sorts of diseases, as to go a long journey to seek him out, and by the force of his mere imagination, for some hours so persuaded and laid his legs asleep, as to obtain that service from them they had a long time forgotten. Had fortune heaped up five or six such-like incidents, it had been enough to have brought this miracle into nature. There was afterwards discovered so much simplicity and so little art in the author of these performances, that he was thought too contemptible to be punished, as would be thought of most such things, were they well examined:—

"We admire after an interval things that deceive."

So does our sight often represent to us strange images at a distance that vanish on approaching near:—

"Report is never fully substantiated."

'Tis wonderful from how many idle beginnings and frivolous causes such famous impressions commonly proceed. This it is that obstructs information; for whilst we seek out causes and solid and weighty ends, worthy of so great a name, we lose the true ones; they escape our sight by their littleness. And, in truth, a very prudent, diligent, and subtle inquisition is required in such searches, indifferent, and not prepossessed. To this very hour, all these miracles and strange events have concealed themselves from me: I have never seen greater monster or miracle in the world than myself: one grows familiar with all strange things by time and custom, but the more I frequent and the better I know myself, the more does my own deformity astonish me, the less I understand myself.

The principal right of advancing and producing such accidents is reserved to fortune. Passing the day before yesterday through a village two leagues from my house, I found the place yet warm with a miracle that had lately failed of success there, wherewith first the neighborhood had been several months amused; then the neighboring provinces began to take it up, and to run thither in great companies of all sorts of people. A young fellow of the place had one night in sport counterfeited the voice of a spirit in his own house without any other design at present, but only for sport; but this

having succeeded with him better than he expected, to extend his farce with more actors he associated with him a stupid silly country girl, and at last there were three of them of the same age and understanding, who from domestic, proceeded to public, preachings, hiding themselves under the altar of the church, never speaking but by night, and forbidding any light to be brought. From words which tended to the conversion of the world, and threats of the day of judgment (for these are subjects under the authority and reverence of which imposture most securely lurks), they proceeded to visions and gesticulations so simple and ridiculous that nothing could hardly be so gross in the sports of little children. Yet had fortune never so little favored the design, who knows to what height this juggling might have at last arrived? These poor devils are at present in prison, and are like shortly to pay for the common folly; and I know not whether some judge will not also make them smart for his. We see clearly into this, which is discovered; but in many things of the like nature that exceed our knowledge, I am of opinion that we ought to suspend our judgment, whether as to rejection or as to reception.

Great abuses in the world are begotten, or, to speak more boldly, all the abuses of the world are begotten, by our being taught to be afraid of professing our ignorance, and that we are bound to accept all things we are not able to refute: we speak of all things by precepts and decisions. The style at Rome was that even that which a witness deposed to having seen with his own eyes, and what a judge determined with his most certain knowledge, was couched in this form of speaking: “it seems to me.” They make me hate things that are likely, when they would impose them upon me as infallible. I love these words which mollify and moderate the temerity of our propositions! “peradventure; in some sort; some; ’tis said, I think,” and the like: and had I been set to train up children I had put this way of answering into their mouths, inquiring and not resolving. “What does this mean? I understand it not; it may be: is it true?” so that they should rather have retained the form of pupils at threescore years old than to go out doctors, as they do, at ten. Whoever will be cured of ignorance must confess it.

Iris is the daughter of Thaumas; admiration is the foundation of all philosophy, inquisition the progress, ignorance the end. But there is a sort of ignorance, strong and generous, that yields nothing in honor and courage to knowledge; an ignorance which to conceive requires no less knowledge

than to conceive knowledge itself. I read in my younger years a trial that Corras, a councillor of Toulouse, printed, of a strange incident, of two men who presented themselves the one for the other. I remember (and I hardly remember anything else) that he seemed to have rendered the imposture of him whom he judged to be guilty, so wonderful and so far exceeding both our knowledge and his own, who was the judge, that I thought it a very bold sentence that condemned him to be hanged. Let us have some form of decree that says, "The court understands nothing of the matter" more freely and ingenuously than the Areopagites did, who, finding themselves perplexed with a cause they could not unravel, ordered the parties to appear again after a hundred years.

The witches of my neighborhood run the hazard of their lives upon the report of every new author who seeks to give body to their dreams. To accommodate the examples that Holy Writ gives us of such things, most certain and irrefragable examples, and to tie them to our modern events, seeing that we neither see the causes nor the means, will require another sort of wit than ours. It, peradventure, only appertains to that sole allpotent testimony to tell us. "This is, and that is, and not that other." God ought to be believed, and certainly with very good reason; but not one amongst us for all that who is astonished at his own narration (and he must of necessity be astonished if he be not out of his wits), whether he employ it about other men's affairs or against himself.

I am plain and heavy, and stick to the solid and the probable, avoiding those ancient reproaches:—

> *"Men are most apt to believe what they least understand: and from the acquisitiveness of the human intellect, obscure things are more easily credited."*

I see very well that men get angry, and that I am forbidden to doubt upon pain of execrable injuries—a new way of persuading! Thank God, I am not to be cuffed into belief. Let them be angry with those who accuse their opinion of falsity; I only accuse it of difficulty and boldness, and condemn the opposite affirmation equally, if not so imperiously, with them. He who will establish this proposition by authority and huffing discovers his reason to be very weak. For a verbal and scholastic altercation let them have as much appearance as their contradictors:—

> *"They may indeed appear to be; let them not be affirmed;"*

but in the real consequence they draw from it these have much the advantage. To kill men, a clear and strong light is required, and our life is too real and essential to warrant these supernatural and fantastic accidents.

As to drugs and poisons, I throw them out of my count, as being the worst sorts of homicides: yet even in this, ’tis said, that men are not always to rely upon the personal confessions of these people; for they have sometimes been known to accuse themselves of the murder of persons who have afterwards been found living and well. In these other extravagant accusations, I should be apt to say, that it is sufficient a man, what recommendation soever he may have, be believed as to human things; but of what is beyond his conception, and of supernatural effect, he ought then only to be believed when authorized by a supernatural approbation. The privilege it has pleased Almighty God to give to some of our witnesses, ought not to be lightly communicated and made cheap. I have my ears battered with a thousand such tales as these: “Three persons saw him such a day in the east: three, the next day in the west: at such an hour, in such a place, and in such habit;” assuredly I should not believe it myself. How much more natural and likely do I find it that two men should lie than that one man in twelve hours’ time should fly with the wind from east to west? How much more natural that our understanding should be carried from its place by the volubility of our disordered minds, than that one of us should be carried by a strange spirit upon a broomstaff, flesh and bones as we are, up the shaft of a chimney? Let not us seek illusions from without and unknown, we who are perpetually agitated with illusions domestic and our own. Methinks one is pardonable in disbelieving a miracle, at least, at all events where one can elude its verification as such, by means not miraculous; and I am of St. Augustine’s opinion, that “’tis better to lean towards doubt than assurance, in things hard to prove and dangerous to believe.”

’Tis now some years ago that I travelled through the territories of a sovereign prince, who, in my favor, and to abate my incredulity, did me the honor to let me see, in his own presence, and in a private place, ten or twelve prisoners of this kind, and amongst others, an old woman, a real witch in foulness and deformity, who long had been famous in that profession. I saw both proofs and free confessions, and I know not what insensible mark upon the miserable creature: I examined and talked with her and the rest as much and as long as I would, and gave the best and

soundest attention I could, and I am not a man to suffer my judgment to be made captive by prepossession. In the end, and in all conscience, I should rather have prescribed them hellebore than hemlock:—

"The thing seemed to resemble minds possessed rather than guilty;"

justice has its corrections proper for such maladies. As to the oppositions and arguments that worthy men have made to me, both there, and often in other places, I have met with none that have convinced me, and that have not admitted a more likely solution than their conclusions. It is true, indeed, that the proofs and reasons that are founded upon experience and fact, I do not go about to untie, neither have they any end; I often cut them, as Alexander did the Gordian knot. After all, 'tis setting a man's conjectures at a very high price upon them to cause a man to be roasted alive.

We are told by several examples, as Praestantius of his father, that being more profoundly asleep than men usually are, he fancied himself to be a mare, and that he served the soldiers for a sumpter; and what he fancied himself to be, he really proved. If sorcerers dream so materially; if dreams can sometimes so incorporate themselves with effects, still I cannot believe that therefore our will should be accountable to justice; which I say as one who am neither judge nor privy councillor, and who think myself by many degrees unworthy so to be, but a man of the common sort, born and vowed to the obedience of the public reason, both in its words and acts. He who should record my idle talk as being to the prejudice of the pettiest law, opinion, or custom of his parish, would do himself a great deal of wrong, and me much more; for, in what I say, I warrant no other certainty, but that 'tis what I had then in my thought, of tumultuous and wavering thought. All I say is by way of discourse, and nothing by way of advice:—

"Neither am I ashamed, as they are, to confess my ignorance of what I do not know;"

I should not speak so boldly, if it were my due to be believed; and so I told a great man, who complained of the tartness and contentiousness of my exhortations. Perceiving you to be ready and prepared on one part, I propose to you the other, with all the diligence and care I can, to clear your judgment, not to compel it. God has your hearts in his hands, and will furnish you with the means of choice. I am not so presumptuous even as to desire that my opinions should bias you in a thing of so great importance:

my fortune has not trained them up to so potent and elevated conclusions. Truly, I have not only a great many humors, but also a great many opinions, that I would endeavor to make my son dislike, if I had one. What, if the truest are not always the most commodious to man, being of so wild a composition?

Whether it be to the purpose or not, 'tis no great matter: 'tis a common proverb in Italy, that he knows not Venus in her perfect sweetness who has never lain with a lame mistress. Fortune, or some particular incident, long ago put this saying into the mouths of the people; and the same is said of men as well as of women; for the queen of the Amazons answered the Scythian who courted her to love, "Lame men perform best." In this feminine republic, to evade the dominion of the males, they lamed them in their infancy—arms, legs, and other members that gave them advantage over them, and only made use of them in that wherein we, in these parts of the world, make use of them. I should have been apt to think, that the shuffling pace of the lame mistress added some new pleasure to the work, and some extraordinary titillation to those who were at the sport; but I have lately learnt that ancient philosophy has itself determined it, which says that the legs and thighs of lame women, not receiving, by reason of their imperfection, their due aliment, it falls out that the genital parts above are fuller and better supplied and much more vigorous; or else that this defect, hindering exercise, they who are troubled with it less dissipate their strength, and come more entire to the sports of Venus; which also is the reason why the Greeks decried the women-weavers as being more hot than other women by reason of their sedentary trade, which they carry on without any great exercise of the body. What is it we may not reason of at this rate? I might also say of these, that the jaggling about whilst so sitting at work, rouses and provokes their desire, as the swinging and jolting of coaches does that of our ladies.

Do not these examples serve to make good what I said at first: that our reasons often anticipate the effect, and have so infinite an extent of jurisdiction that they judge and exercise themselves even on inanity itself and non-existency? Besides the flexibility of our invention to forge reasons of all sorts of dreams, our imagination is equally facile to receive impressions of falsity by very frivolous appearances; for, by the sole authority of the ancient and common use of this proverb, I have formerly made myself believe that I have had more pleasure in a woman by reason

she was not straight, and accordingly reckoned that deformity amongst her graces.

Torquato Tasso, in the comparison he makes betwixt France and Italy, says he has observed that our legs are generally smaller than those of the Italian gentlemen, and attributes the cause of it to our being continually on horseback; which is the very same cause from which Suetonius draws a quite opposite conclusion; for he says, on the contrary, that Germanicus had made his legs bigger by the continuation of the same exercise. Nothing is so supple and erratic as our understanding; it is the shoe of Theramenes, fit for all feet. It is double and diverse, and the matters are double and diverse too. "Give me a drachm of silver," said a Cynic philosopher to Antigonus. "That is not a present befitting a king," replied he. "Give me then a talent," said the other. "That is not a present befitting a Cynic":—

> *"Whether the heat opens more passages and secret pores through which the sap may be derived into the new-born herbs; or whether it rather hardens and binds the gaping veins that the small showers and keen influence of the violent sun or penetrating cold of Boreas may not hurt them."*
>
> *"Every medal has its reverse."*

This is the reason why Clitomachus said of old that Carneades had outdone the labors of Hercules, in having eradicated consent from men, that is to say, opinion and the courage of judging. This so vigorous fancy of Carneades sprang, in my opinion, anciently from the impudence of those who made profession of knowledge and their immeasurable self-conceit. Aesop was set to sale with two other slaves; the buyer asked the first of these what he could do; he, to enhance his own value, promised mountains and marvels, saying he could do this and that, and I know not what; the second said as much of himself or more: when it came to Aesop's turn, and that he was also asked what he could do; "Nothing," said he, "for these two have taken up all before me; they know everything." So has it happened in the school of philosophy: the pride of those who attributed the capacity of all things to the human mind created in others, out of despite and emulation, this opinion, that it is capable of nothing: the one maintain the same extreme in ignorance that the others do in knowledge; to make it undeniably manifest that man is immoderate throughout, and can never stop but of necessity and the want of ability to proceed further.

ON PHYSIOGNOMY

ALMOST ALL the opinions we have are taken on authority and trust; and ’tis not amiss; we could not choose worse than by ourselves in so weak an age. That image of Socrates’ discourses, which his friends have transmitted to us, we approve upon no other account than a reverence to public sanction: ’tis not according to our own knowledge; they are not after our way; if anything of the kind should spring up now, few men would value them. We discern no graces that are not pointed and puffed out and inflated by art; such as glide on in their own purity and simplicity easily escape so gross a sight as ours; they have a delicate and concealed beauty, such as requires a clear and purified sight to discover its secret light. Is not simplicity, as we take it, cousin-german to folly and a quality of reproach? Socrates makes his soul move a natural and common motion: a peasant said this; a woman said that; he has never anybody in his mouth but carters, joiners, cobblers, and masons; his are inductions and similitudes drawn from the most common and known actions of men; every one understands him. We should never have recognized the nobility and splendor of his admirable conceptions under so mean a form; we, who think all things low and flat that are not elevated by learned doctrine, and who discern no riches but in pomp and show. This world of ours is only formed for ostentation: men are only puffed up with wind, and are bandied to and fro like tennis-balls. He proposed to himself no vain and idle fancies; his design was to furnish us with precepts and things that more really and fitly serve to the use of life:—

“To keep the mean, to observe a just limit, and to follow Nature.”

He was also always one and the same, and raised himself, not by starts but by complexion, to the highest pitch of vigor; or, to say better, mounted not at all, but rather brought down, reduced, and subjected all asperities and difficulties to his original and natural condition; for in Cato ’tis most manifest that ’tis a procedure extended far beyond the common ways of men: in the brave exploits of his life, and in his death, we find him always mounted upon the great horse; whereas the other ever creeps upon the ground, and with a gentle and ordinary pace, treats of the most useful matters, and bears himself, both at his death and in the rudest difficulties that could present themselves, in the ordinary way of human life.

It has fallen out well that the man most worthy to be known and to be presented to the world for example should be he of whom we have the most certain knowledge; he has been pried into by the most clear-sighted men that ever were; the testimonies we have of him are admirable both in fidelity and fulness. ’Tis a great thing that he was able so to order the pure imaginations of a child, that, without altering or wresting them, he thereby produced the most beautiful effects of our soul: he presents it neither elevated nor rich; he only represents it sound, but assuredly with a brisk and full health. By these common and natural springs, by these ordinary and popular fancies, without being moved or put out, he set up not only the most regular, but the most high and vigorous beliefs, actions, and manners that ever were. ’Tis he who brought again from heaven, where she lost her time, human wisdom, to restore her to man with whom her most just and greatest business lies. See him plead before his judges; observe by what reasons he rouses his courage to the hazards of war; with what arguments he fortifies his patience against calumny, tyranny, death, and the perverseness of his wife: you will find nothing in all this borrowed from arts and sciences: the simplest may there discover their own means and strength; ’tis not possible more to retire or to creep more low. He has done human nature a great kindness in showing it how much it can do of itself.

We are all of us richer than we think we are; but we are taught to borrow and to beg, and brought up more to make use of what is another’s than of our own. Man can in nothing fix himself to his actual necessity: of pleasure, wealth, and power, he grasps at more than he can hold; his greediness is incapable of moderation. And I find that in curiosity of knowing he is the same; he cuts himself out more work than he can do, and more than he needs to do: extending the utility of knowledge to the full of its matter:—

> *“We carry intemperance into the study of literature, as well as into everything else.”*

And Tacitus had reason to commend the mother of Agricola for having restrained her son in his too violent appetite for learning.

’Tis a good, if duly considered, which has in it, as the other goods of men have, a great deal of vanity and weakness, proper and natural to itself, and that costs very dear. Its acquisition is far more hazardous than that of all other meat or drink; for, as to other things, what we have bought we carry home in some vessel, and there have full leisure to examine our purchase,

how much shall we eat or drink of it, and when: but sciences we can, at the very first, stow into no other vessel than the soul; we swallow them in buying, and return from the market, either already infected or amended: there are some that only burden and overcharge the stomach, instead of nourishing; and, moreover, some that, under color of curing, poison us. I have been pleased, in places where I have been, to see men in devotion vow ignorance as well as chastity, poverty, and penitence: ’tis also a gelding of our unruly appetites, to blunt this cupidity that spurs us on to the study of books, and to deprive the soul of this voluptuous complacency that tickles us with the opinion of knowledge: and ’tis plenarily to accomplish the vow of poverty, to add unto it that of the mind. We need little doctrine to live at our ease; and Socrates teaches us that this is in us, and the way how to find it, and the manner how to use it. All our sufficiency which exceeds the natural is well-nigh superflous and vain: ’tis much if it does not rather burden and cumber us than do us good:—

“Little learning is needed to form a sound mind:”

’tis a feverish excess of the mind; a tempestuous and unquiet instrument. Do but recollect yourself, and you will find in yourself natural arguments against death, true, and the fittest to serve you in time of necessity: ’tis they that make a peasant, and whole nations, die with as much firmness as a philosopher. Should I have died less cheerfully before I had read Cicero’s Tusculan Quaestiones? I believe not; and when I find myself at the best, I perceive that my tongue is enriched indeed, but my courage little or nothing elevated by them; that is just as nature framed it at first, and defends itself against the conflict only after a natural and ordinary way. Books have not so much served me for instruction as exercise. What if knowledge, trying to arm us with new defences against natural inconveniences, has more imprinted in our fancies their weight and greatness, than her reasons and subtleties to secure us from them? They are subtleties, indeed, with which she often alarms us to little purpose. Do but observe how many slight and frivolous, and, if nearly examined, incorporeal arguments, the closest and wisest authors scatter about one good one: they are but verbal quirks and fallacies to amuse and gull us: but forasmuch as it may be with some profit, I will sift them no further; many of that sort are here and there dispersed up and down this book, either borrowed or by imitation. Therefore one ought to take a little heed not to

call that force which is only a pretty knack of writing, and that solid which is only sharp, or that good which is only fine:—

"Which more delight in the tasting than in being drunk,"

everything that pleases does not nourish:—

"Where the question is not about the wit, but about the mind."

To see the trouble that Seneca gives himself to fortify himself against death; to see him so sweat and pant to harden and encourage himself, and bustle so long upon this perch, would have lessened his reputation with me, had he not very bravely held himself at the last. His so ardent and frequent agitations discover that he was in himself impetuous and passionate:—

"A great courage speaks more calmly and more securely. There is not one complexion for the wit and another for the mind;"

he must be convinced at his own expense; and he in some sort discovers that he was hard pressed by his enemy. Plutarch's way, by how much it is more disdainful and farther stretched, is, in my opinion, so much more manly and persuasive: and I am apt to believe that his soul had more assured and more regular motions. The one more sharp, pricks and makes us start, and more touches the soul; the other more constantly solid, forms, establishes, and supports us, and more touches the understanding. That ravishes the judgment, this wins it. I have likewise seen other writings, yet more reverenced than these, that in the representation of the conflict they maintain against the temptations of the flesh, paint them so sharp, so powerful and invincible, that we ourselves, who are of the common herd, are as much to wonder at the strangeness and unknown force of their temptation, as at the resisting it.

To what end do we so arm ourselves with this harness of science? Let us look down upon the poor people that we see scattered upon the face of the earth, prone and intent upon their business, that neither know Aristotle nor Cato, example nor precept; from these nature every day extracts effects of constancy and patience, more pure and manly than those we so inquisitively study in the schools: how many do I ordinarily see who slight poverty? how many who desire to die, or who die without alarm or regret? He who is now digging in my garden, has this morning buried his father or his son. The very names by which they call diseases sweeten and mollify the sharpness of them: the phthisic is with them no more than a cough, dysentery but a looseness, the pleurisy but a stitch; and, as they gently name them, so they patiently endure them; they are very great and grievous

indeed when they hinder their ordinary labor; they never keep their beds but to die:—

"That overt and simple virtue is converted into an obscure and subtle science."

I was writing this about the time when a great load of our troubles for several months lay with all its weight upon me; I had the enemy at my door on one side, and the freebooters, worse enemies, on the other:—

"The fight is not with arms, but with vices;"

and underwent all sorts of military injuries at once:—

"Right and left a formidable enemy is to be feared, and threatens me on both sides with impending danger."

A monstrous war! Other wars are bent against strangers, this against itself, destroying itself with its own poison. It is of so malignant and ruinous a nature, that it ruins itself with the rest; and with its own rage mangles and tears itself to pieces. We more often see it dissolve of itself than through scarcity of any necessary thing or by force of the enemy. All discipline evades it; it comes to compose sedition, and is itself full of it; would chastise disobedience, and itself is the example; and, employed for the defence of the laws, rebels against its own. What a condition are we in! Our physic makes us sick!—

"Our disease is poisoned with its very remedies."

"Right and wrong, all shuffled together in this wicked fury, have deprived us of the gods' protection."

In the beginning of these popular maladies, one may distinguish the sound from the sick; but when they come to continue, as ours have done, the whole body is then infected from head to foot; no part is free from corruption, for there is no air that men so greedily draw in that diffuses itself so soon and that penetrates so deep as that of license. Our armies only subsist and are kept together by the cement of foreigners; for of Frenchmen there is now no constant and regular corps d'armee to be made. What a shame it is! there is no longer any discipline but what we see in the mercenary soldiers. As to ourselves, our conduct is at discretion, and that not of the chief, but every one at his own. The general has a harder game to play within than he has without; he it is who has to follow, to court the soldiers, to give way to them; he alone has to obey; all the rest is dissolution and free license. It pleases me to observe how much pusillanimity and cowardice there is in ambition; by how abject and servile ways it must

arrive at its end; but it displeases me to see good and generous natures, and that are capable of justice, every day corrupted in the management and command of this confusion. Long toleration begets habit; habit, consent and imitation. We had ill formed souls enough, without spoiling those that were generous and good; so that, if we hold on, there will scarcely remain any with whom to intrust the health of this State of ours, in case fortune chance to restore it:—

"Forbid not, at least, that this young man repair this ruined age."

What is become of the old precept, "That soldiers ought more to fear their chief than the enemy?" and of what wonderful example, that an orchard being enclosed within the precincts of a camp of the Roman army, was seen at their dislodgment the next day in the same condition, not an apple, though ripe and delicious, being pulled off, but all left to the possessor? I could wish that our youth, instead of the time they spend in less fruitful travels and less honorable employments, would bestow one half of that time in being an eye-witness of naval exploits, under some good captain of Rhodes, and the other half in observing the discipline of the Turkish armies; for they have many differences and advantages over ours; one of these is, that our soldiers become more licentious in expeditions, theirs more temperate and circumspect; for the thefts and insolencies committed upon the common people, which are only punished with a cudgel in peace, are capital in war; for an egg taken by a Turkish soldier without paying for it, fifty blows with a stick is the fixed rate; for anything else, of what sort or how trivial soever, not necessary to nourishment, they are presently impaled or beheaded without mercy. I am astonished, in the history of Selim, the most cruel conqueror that ever was, to see that when he subdued Egypt, the beautiful gardens about Damascus being all open, and in a conquered land, and his army encamped upon the very place, should be left untouched by the hands of the soldiers, by reason they had not received the signal of pillage.

But is there any disease in a government that it is worth while to physic with such a mortal drug? No, said Favonius, not even the tyrannical usurpation of a Commonwealth. Plato, likewise, will not consent that a man should violate the peace of his country in order to cure it, and by no means approves of a reformation that disturbs and hazards all, and that is to be purchased at the price of the citizens' blood and ruin; determining it to be the duty of a good patriot in such a case to let it alone, and only to pray to

God for his extraordinary assistance: and he seems to be angry with his great friend Dion, for having proceeded somewhat after another manner. I was a Platonist in this point before I knew there had ever been such a man as Plato in the world. And if this person ought absolutely to be rejected from our society (he who by the sincerity of his conscience merited from the divine favor to penetrate so far into the Christian light, through the universal darkness wherein the world was involved in his time), I do not think it becomes us to suffer ourselves to be instructed by a heathen, how great an impiety it is not to expect from God any relief simply his own and without our co-operation. I often doubt, whether amongst so many men as meddle in such affairs, there is not to be found some one of so weak understanding as to have been really persuaded that he went towards reformation by the worst of deformations; and advanced towards salvation by the most express causes that we have of most assured damnation; that by overthrowing government, the magistracy, and the laws, in whose protection God has placed him, by dismembering his good mother, and giving her limbs to be mangled by her old enemies, filling fraternal hearts with parricidal hatreds, calling devils and furies to his aid, he can assist the most holy sweetness and justice of the divine law. Ambition, avarice, cruelty, and revenge have not sufficient natural impetuosity of their own; let us bait them with the glorious titles of justice and devotion. There cannot a worst state of things be imagined than where wickedness comes to be legitimate; and assumes, with the magistrates' permission, the cloak of virtue:—

> *"Nothing has a more deceiving face than false religion, where the divinity of the gods is obscured by crimes."*

The extremest sort of injustice, according to Plato, is where that which is unjust should be reputed for just.

The common people then suffered very much, and not present damage only:—

> *"Such great disorders overtake our fields on every side,"*

but future too; the living were to suffer, and so were they who were yet unborn; they stripped them, and consequently myself, even of hope, taking from them all they had laid up in store to live on for many years:—

> *"What they cannot bear away, they spoil; and the wicked mob burn harmless houses; walls cannot secure their masters, and the fields are squalid with devastation."*

Besides this shock, I suffered others: I underwent the inconveniences that moderation brings along with it in such a disease: I was robbed on all hands; to the Ghibelline I was a Guelph, and to the Guelph a Ghibelline; one of my poets expresses this very well, but I know not where it is. The situation of my house, and my friendliness with my neighbors, presented me with one face; my life and my actions with another. They did not lay formal accusations to my charge, for they had no foundation for so doing; I never hide my head from the laws, and whoever would have questioned me, would have done himself a greater prejudice than me; they were only mute suspicions that were whispered about, which never want appearance in so confused a mixture, no more than envious or idle heads. I commonly myself lend a hand to injurious presumptions that fortune scatters abroad against me, by a way I have ever had of evading to justify, excuse, or explain myself; conceiving that it were to compromise my conscience to plead in its behalf:—

"For perspicuity is lessened by argument."

and, as if every one saw as clearly into me as I do myself, instead of retiring from an accusation, I step up to meet it, and rather give it some kind of color by an ironical and scoffing confession, if I do not sit totally mute, as of a thing not worth my answer. But such as look upon this kind of behavior of mine as too haughty a confidence, have as little kindness for me as they who interpret it the weakness of an indefensible cause; namely, the great folks, towards whom want of submission is the great fault, harsh towards all justice that knows and feels itself, and is not submissive, humble, and suppliant; I have often knocked my head against this pillar. So it is that at what then befell me, an ambitious man would have hanged himself, and a covetous man would have done the same. I have no manner of care of getting:—

"If I may have what I now own, or even less, and may live for myself what of life remains, if the gods grant me remaining years:"

but the losses that befall me by the injury of others, whether by theft or violence, go almost as near my heart as they would do to that of the most avaricious man. The offence troubles me, without comparison, more than the loss. A thousand several sorts of mischiefs fell upon me in the neck of one another; I could more cheerfully have borne them all at once.

I was already considering to whom, amongst my friends, I might commit a necessitous and discredited old age; and having turned my eyes

quite round, I found myself in pour-point. To let one's self fall plump down, and from so great a height, it ought to be in the arms of a solid, vigorous, and fortunate friendship: these are very rare, if there be any. At last, I saw that it was safest for me to trust to myself in my necessity; and if it should so fall out, that I should be but upon cold terms in Fortune's favor, I should so much the more pressingly recommend me to my own, and attach myself and look to myself all the more closely. Men on all occasions throw themselves upon foreign assistance to spare their own, which is alone certain and sufficient to him who knows how therewith to arm himself. Every one runs elsewhere, and to the future, forasmuch as no one is arrived at himself. And I was satisfied that they were profitable inconveniences; forasmuch as, first, ill scholars are to be admonished with the rod, when reason will not do, as a crooked piece of wood is by fire and straining reduced to straightness. I have a great while preached to myself to stick close to my own concerns, and separate myself from the affairs of others; yet I am still turning my eyes aside. A bow, a favorable word, a kind look from a great person tempts me; of which God knows if there is scarcity in these days, and what they signify. I, moreover, without wrinkling my forehead, harken to the persuasions offered me, to draw me into the market-place, and so gently refuse, as if I were half willing to be overcome. Now for so indocile a spirit blows are required; this vessel which thus chops and cleaves, and is ready to fall one piece from another, must have the hoops forced down with good sound strokes of a mallet. Secondly, that this accident served me for exercise to prepare me for worse, if I, who both by the benefit of fortune, and by the condition of my manners, hoped to be among the last, should happen to be one of the first assailed by this storm; instructing myself betimes to constrain my life, and fit it for a new state. The true liberty is to be able to do what a man will with himself:—

"He is most potent who is master of himself."

In an ordinary and quiet time, a man prepares himself for moderate and common accidents; but in the confusion wherein we have been for these thirty years, every Frenchman, whether personally or in general, sees himself every hour upon the point of the total ruin and overthrow of his fortune: by so much the more ought he to have his courage supplied with the strongest and most vigorous provisions. Let us thank fortune, that has not made us live in an effeminate, idle, and languishing age; some who could never have been so by other means will be made famous by their

misfortunes. As I seldom read in histories the confusions of other states without regret that I was not present, the better to consider them, so does my curiosity make me in some sort please myself in seeing with my own eyes this notable spectacle of our public death, its form and symptoms; and since I cannot hinder it, I am content to have been destined to be present therein, and thereby to instruct myself. So do we eagerly covet to see, though but in shadow and the fables of theatres, the pomp of tragic representations of human fortune; 'tis not without compassion at what we hear, but we please ourselves in rousing our displeasure, by the rarity of these pitiable events. Nothing tickles that does not pinch. And good historians skip over, as stagnant water and dead sea, calm narrations, to return to seditions, to wars, to which they know that we invite them.

I question whether I can decently confess with how small a sacrifice of its repose and tranquillity I have passed over above the one half of my life amid the ruin of my country. I lend myself my patience somewhat too cheap, in accidents that do not privately assail me; and do not so much regard what they take from me, as what remains safe, both within and without. There is comfort in evading, one while this, another while that, of the evils that are levelled at ourselves too, at last, but at present hurt others only about us; as also, that in matters of public interest, the more universally my affection is dispersed, the weaker it is: to which may be added, that it is half true:—

> *"We are only so far sensible of public evils as they respect our private affairs;"*

and that the health from which we fell was so ill, that itself relieves the regret we should have for it. It was health, but only in comparison with the sickness that has succeeded it: we are not fallen from any great height; the corruption and brigandage which are in dignity and office seem to me the least supportable: we are less injuriously rifled in a wood than in a place of security. It was a universal juncture of particular members, each corrupted by emulation of the others, and most of them with old ulcers, that neither received nor required any cure. This convulsion, therefore, really more animated than pressed me, by the assistance of my conscience, which was not only at peace within itself, but elevated, and I did not find any reason to complain of myself. Also, as God never sends evils, any more than goods, absolutely pure to men, my health continued at that time more than usually good; and, as I can do nothing without it, there are few things that I cannot

do with it. It afforded me means to rouse up all my faculties, and to lay my hand before the wound that would else, peradventure, have gone farther; and I experienced, in my patience, that I had some stand against fortune, and that it must be a great shock could throw me out of the saddle. I do not say this to provoke her to give me a more vigorous charge: I am her humble servant, and submit to her pleasure: let her be content, in God's name. Am I sensible of her assaults? Yes, I am. But, as those who are possessed and oppressed with sorrow sometimes suffer themselves, nevertheless, by intervals to taste a little pleasure, and are sometimes surprised with a smile, so have I so much power over myself, as to make my ordinary condition quiet and free from disturbing thoughts; yet I suffer myself, withal, by fits to be surprised with the stings of those unpleasing imaginations that assault me, whilst I am arming myself to drive them away, or at least to wrestle with them.

But behold another aggravation of the evil which befell me in the tail of the rest: both without doors and within I was assailed with a most violent plague, violent in comparison of all others; for as sound bodies are subject to more grievous maladies, forasmuch as they are not to be forced but by such, so my very healthful air, where no contagion, however near, in the memory of man, ever took footing, coming to be corrupted, produced strange effects:—

> *"Old and young die in mixed heaps. Cruel Proserpine forbears none."*

I had to suffer this pleasant condition, that the sight of my house was frightful to me; whatever I had there was without guard, and left to the mercy of any one who wished to take it. I myself, who am so hospitable, was in very great distress for a retreat for my family; a distracted family, frightful both to its friends and itself, and filling every place with horror where it attempted to settle, having to shift its abode so soon as any one's finger began but to ache; all diseases are then concluded to be the plague, and people do not stay to examine whether they are so or no. And the mischief on't is that, according to the rules of art, in every danger that a man comes near, he must undergo a quarantine in fear of the evil, your imagination all the while tormenting you at pleasure, and turning even your health itself into a fever. Yet all this would have much less affected me had I not withal been compelled to be sensible of the sufferings of others, and miserably to serve six months together for a guide to this caravan; for I

carry my own antidotes within myself, which are resolution and patience. Apprehension, which is particularly feared in this disease, does not much trouble me; and, if being alone, I should have been taken, it had been a less cheerless and more remote departure; ’tis a kind of death that I do not think of the worst sort; ’tis commonly short, stupid, without pain, and consoled by the public condition; without ceremony, without mourning, without a crowd. But as to the people about us, the hundredth part of them could not be saved:—

“You would see shepherds’ haunts deserted, and far and wide empty pastures.”

In this place my largest revenue is manual: what a hundred men ploughed for me, lay a long time fallow.

But then, what example of resolution did we not see in the simplicity of all this people? Generally, every one renounced all care of life; the grapes, the principal wealth of the country, remained untouched upon the vines; every man indifferently prepared for and expected death, either to-night or to-morrow, with a countenance and voice so far from fear, as if they had come to terms with this necessity, and that it was a universal and inevitable sentence. ’Tis always such; but how slender hold has the resolution of dying? The distance and difference of a few hours, the sole consideration of company, renders its apprehension various to us. Observe these people; by reason that they die in the same month, children, young people, and old, they are no longer astonished at it; they no longer lament. I saw some who were afraid of staying behind, as in a dreadful solitude; and I did not commonly observe any other solicitude amongst them than that of sepulture; they were troubled to see the dead bodies scattered about the fields, at the mercy of the wild beasts that presently flocked thither. How differing are the fancies of men; the Neorites, a nation subjected by Alexander, threw the bodies of their dead into the deepest and less frequented part of their woods, on purpose to have them there eaten; the only sepulture reputed happy amongst them. Some, who were yet in health, dug their own graves; others laid themselves down in them whilst alive; and a laborer of mine, in dying, with his hands and feet pulled the earth upon him. Was not this to nestle and settle himself to sleep at greater ease? A bravery in some sort like that of the Roman soldiers who, after the battle of Cannae, were found with their heads thrust into holes in the earth, which they had made, and in suffocating themselves, with their own hands pulled

the earth about their ears. In short, a whole province was, by the common usage, at once brought to a course nothing inferior in undauntedness to the most studied and premeditated resolution.

Most of the instructions of science to encourage us herein have in them more of show than of force, and more of ornament than of effect. We have abandoned Nature, and will teach her what to do; teach her who so happily and so securely conducted us; and in the meantime, from the footsteps of her instruction, and that little which, by the benefit of ignorance, remains of her image imprinted in the life of this rustic rout of unpolished men, science is constrained every day to borrow patterns for her disciples of constancy, tranquillity, and innocence. It is pretty to see that these persons, full of so much fine knowledge, have to imitate this foolish simplicity, and this in the primary actions of virtue; and that our wisdom must learn even from beasts the most profitable instructions in the greatest and most necessary concerns of our life; as, how we are to live and die, manage our property, love and bring up our children, maintain justice: a singular testimony of human infirmity; and that this reason we so handle at our pleasure, finding evermore some diversity and novelty, leaves in us no apparent trace of nature. Men have done with nature as perfumers with oils; they have sophisticated her with so many argumentations and far-fetched discourses, that she is become variable and particular to each, and has lost her proper, constant, and universal face; so that we must seek testimony from beasts, not subject to favor, corruption, or diversity of opinions. It is, indeed, true that even these themselves do not always go exactly in the path of nature, but wherein they swerve, it is so little that you may always see the track; as horses that are led make many bounds and curvets, but ’tis always at the length of the halter, and still follow him that leads them; and as a young hawk takes its flight, but still under the restraint of its tether:—

> *“To meditate upon banishments, tortures, wars, diseases, and shipwrecks, that thou mayest not be a novice in any disaster.”*

What good will this curiosity do us, to anticipate all the inconveniences of human nature, and to prepare ourselves with so much trouble against things which, peradventure, will never befall us?—

> *“It troubles men as much that they may possibly suffer, as if they really did suffer;”*

not only the blow, but the wind of the blow strikes us: or, like frenetic people—for certainly it is a frenzy—to go immediately and whip yourself,

because it may so fall out that Fortune may one day make you undergo it; and to put on your furred gown at Midsummer, because you will stand in need of it at Christmas! Throw yourselves, say they, into the experience of all the evils, the most extreme evils that can possibly befall you, and so be assured of them. On the contrary, the most easy and most natural way would be to banish even the thoughts of them; they will not come soon enough; their true being will not continue with us long enough; our mind must lengthen and extend them; we must incorporate them in us beforehand, and there entertain them, as if they would not otherwise sufficiently press upon our senses. "We shall find them heavy enough when they come," says one of our masters, of none of the tender sects, but of the most severe; "in the meantime, favor thyself; believe what pleases thee best; what good will it do thee to anticipate thy ill fortune, to lose the present for fear of the future: and to make thyself miserable now, because thou art to be so in time?" These are his words. Science, indeed, does us one good office in instructing us exactly as to the dimensions of evils:—

"Probing mortal hearts with cares!"

'Twere pity that any part of their greatness should escape our sense and knowledge.

'Tis certain that for the most part the preparation for death has administered more torment than the thing itself. It was of old truly said, and by a very judicious author:—

"Suffering itself less afflicts the senses than the apprehension of suffering."

The sentiment of present death sometimes, of itself, animates us with a prompt resolution not to avoid a thing that is utterly inevitable: many gladiators have been seen in the olden time, who, after having fought timorously and ill, have courageously entertained death, offering their throats to the enemies' sword and bidding them despatch. The sight of future death requires a courage that is slow, and consequently hard to be got. If you know not how to die, never trouble yourself; nature will, at the time, fully and sufficiently instruct you; she will exactly do that business for you; take you no care:—

"Mortals, in vain you seek to know the uncertain hour of death, and by what channel it will come upon you."

" 'Tis less painful to undergo sudden destruction; 'tis hard to bear that which you long fear."

We trouble life by the care of death, and death by the care of life: the one torments, the other frights us. It is not against death that we prepare, that is too momentary a thing; a quarter of an hour's suffering, without consequence and without damage, does not deserve especial precepts: to say the truth, we prepare ourselves against the preparations of death. Philosophy ordains that we should always have death before our eyes, to see and consider it before the time, and then gives us rules and precautions to provide that this foresight and thought do us no harm; just so do physicians, who throw us into diseases, to the end they may have whereon to employ their drugs and their art. If we have not known how to live, 'tis injustice to teach us how to die, and make the end difform from all the rest; if we have known how to live firmly and quietly, we shall know how to die so too. They may boast as much as they please:—

"The whole life of philosophers is the meditation of death;"

but I fancy that, though it be the end, it is not the aim of life; 'tis its end, its extremity, but not, nevertheless, its object; it ought itself to be its own aim and design; its true study is to order, govern, and suffer itself. In the number of several other offices, that the general and principal chapter of Knowing how to Live comprehends, is this article of Knowing how to Die; and, did not our fears give it weight, one of the lightest too.

To judge of them by utility and by the naked truth, the lessons of simplicity are not much inferior to those which learning teaches us: nay, quite the contrary. Men differ in sentiment and force; we must lead them to their own good according to their capacities and by various ways:—

"Wherever the season takes me, there I am carried as a guest."

I never saw any peasant among my neighbors cogitate with what countenance and assurance he should pass over his last hour; nature teaches him not to think of death till he is dying; and then he does it with a better grace than Aristotle, upon whom death presses with a double weight, both of itself and from so long a premeditation; and, therefore, it was the opinion of Caesar, that the least premeditated death was the easiest and the most happy:—

"He grieves more than is necessary, who grieves before it is necessary."

The sharpness of this imagination springs from our curiosity: 'tis thus we ever impede ourselves, desiring to anticipate and regulate natural prescripts. It is only for the doctors to dine worse for it, when in the best

health, and to frown at the image of death; the common sort stand in need of no remedy or consolation, but just in the shock, and when the blow comes; and consider on't no more than just what they endure. Is it not then, as we say, that the stolidity and want of apprehension in the vulgar give them that patience in present evils, and that profound carelessness of future sinister accidents? That their souls, in being more gross and dull, are less penetrable and not so easily moved? If it be so, let us henceforth, in God's name, teach nothing but ignorance; 'tis the utmost fruit the sciences promise us, to which this stolidity so gently leads its disciples.

We have no want of good masters, interpreters of natural simplicity. Socrates shall be one; for, as I remember, he speaks something to this purpose to the judges who sat upon his life and death. "I am afraid, my masters, that if I entreat you not to put me to death, I shall confirm the charge of my accusers, which is, that I pretend to be wiser than others, as having some more secret knowledge of things that are above and below us. I have neither frequented nor known death, nor have ever seen any person that has tried its qualities, from whom to inform myself. Such as fear it, presuppose they know it; as for my part, I neither know what it is, nor what they do in the other world. Death is, peradventure, an indifferent thing; peradventure, a thing to be desired. 'Tis nevertheless to be believed, if it be a transmigration from one place to another, that it is a bettering of one's condition to go and live with so many great persons deceased, and to be exempt from having any more to do with unjust and corrupt judges; if it be an annihilation of our being, 'tis yet a bettering of one's condition to enter into a long and peaceable night; we find nothing more sweet in life than quiet repose and a profound sleep without dreams. The things that I know to be evil, as to injure one's neighbor and to disobey one's superior, whether it be God or man, I carefully avoid; such as I do not know whether they be good or evil, I cannot fear them. If I am to die and leave you alive, the gods alone only know whether it will go better with you or with me. Wherefore, as to what concerns me, you may do as you shall think fit. But according to my method of advising just and profitable things, I say that you will do your consciences more right to set me at liberty, unless you see further into my cause than I do; and, judging according to my past actions, both public and private, according to my intentions, and according to the profit that so many of our citizens, both young and old, daily extract from my conversation, and the fruit that you all reap from me, you cannot more duly acquit yourselves

towards my merit than in ordering that, my poverty considered, I should be maintained at the Prytanaeum, at the public expense, a thing that I have often known you, with less reason, grant to others. Do not impute it to obstinacy or disdain that I do not, according to the custom, supplicate and go about to move you to commiseration. I have both friends and kindred, not being, as Homer says, begotten of wood or of stone, no more than others, who might well present themselves before you with tears and mourning, and I have three desolate children with whom to move you to compassion; but I should do a shame to our city at the age I am, and in the reputation of wisdom which is now charged against me, to appear in such an abject form. What would men say of the other Athenians? I have always admonished those who have frequented my lectures, not to redeem their lives by an unbecoming action; and in the wars of my country, at Amphipolis, Potidea, Delia, and other expeditions where I have been, I have effectually manifested how far I was from securing my safety by my shame. I should, moreover, compromise your duty, and should invite you to unbecoming things; for ’tis not for my prayers to persuade you, but for the pure and solid reasons of justice. You have sworn to the gods to keep yourselves upright; and it would seem as if I suspected you, or would recriminate upon you that I do not believe that you are so; and I should testify against myself, not to believe them as I ought, mistrusting their conduct, and not purely committing my affair into their hands. I wholly rely upon them; and hold myself assured they will do in this what shall be most fit both for you and for me: good men, whether living or dead, have no reason to fear the gods.”

Is not this an innocent child’s pleading of an unimaginable loftiness, true, frank, and just, unexampled; and in what a necessity employed? Truly, he had very good reason to prefer it before that which the great orator Lysias had penned for him: admirably couched, indeed, in the judiciary style, but unworthy of so noble a criminal. Had a suppliant voice been heard out of the mouth of Socrates, that lofty virtue had struck sail in the height of its glory; and ought his rich and powerful nature to have committed her defence to art, and, in her highest proof, have renounced truth and simplicity, the ornaments of his speaking, to adorn and deck herself with the embellishments of figures and the flourishes of a premeditated speech? He did very wisely, and like himself, not to corrupt the tenor of an incorrupt life, and so sacred an image of the human form, to spin out his decrepitude

another year, and to betray the immortal memory of that glorious end. He owed his life not to himself, but to the example of the world; had it not been a public damage, that he should have concluded it after a lazy and obscure manner? Assuredly, that careless and indifferent consideration of his death deserved that posterity should consider it so much the more, as indeed they did; and there is nothing so just in justice than that which fortune ordained for his recommendation; for the Athenians abominated all those who had been causers of his death to such a degree, that they avoided them as excommunicated persons, and looked upon everything as polluted that had been touched by them; no one would wash with them in the public baths, none would salute or own acquaintance with them: so that, at last, unable longer to support this public hatred, they hanged themselves.

If any one shall think that, amongst so many other examples that I had to choose out of in the sayings of Socrates for my present purpose, I have made an ill choice of this, and shall judge this discourse of his elevated above common conceptions, I must tell them that I have purposely selected it; for I am of another opinion, and hold it to be a discourse, in rank and simplicity, much below and behind common conceptions. He represents, in an inartificial boldness and infantine security, the pure and first impression and ignorance of nature; for it is to be believed that we have naturally a fear of pain, but not of death, by reason of itself; 'tis a part of our being, and no less essential than living. To what end should nature have begotten in us a hatred to it and a horror of it, considering that it is of so great utility to her in maintaining the succession and vicissitude of her works? and that in this universal republic, it conduces more to birth and augmentation than to loss or ruin?—

"Sic rerum summa novatur."

"Mille animas una necata dedit."

"The failing of one life is the passage to a thousand other lives." Nature has imprinted in beasts the care of themselves and of their conservation; they proceed so far as to be timorous of being worse, of hitting or hurting themselves, of our haltering and beating them, accidents subject to their sense and experience; but that we should kill them, they cannot fear, nor have they the faculty to imagine and conclude such a thing as death; it is said, indeed, that we see them not only cheerfully undergo it, horses for the most part neighing and swans singing when they die, but, moreover, seek it at need, of which elephants have given many examples.

Besides, the method of arguing, of which Socrates here makes use, is it not equally admirable both in simplicity and vehemence? Truly it is much more easy to speak like Aristotle and to live like Caesar than to speak and live as Socrates did; there lies the extreme degree of perfection and difficulty; art cannot reach it. Now, our faculties are not so trained up; we do not try, we do not know them; we invest ourselves with those of others, and let our own lie idle; as some one may say of me, that I have here only made a nosegay of foreign flowers, having furnished nothing of my own but the thread to tie them.

Certainly I have so far yielded to public opinion, that those borrowed ornaments accompany me; but I do not mean that they shall cover me and hide me; that is quite contrary to my design, who desire to make a show of nothing but what is my own, and what is my own by nature; and had I taken my own advice, I had at all hazards spoken purely alone. I more and more load myself every day, beyond my purpose and first method, upon the account of idleness and the humor of the age. If it misbecome me, as I believe it does, 'tis no matter; it may be of use to some others. Such there are who quote Plato and Homer, who never saw either of them; and I also have taken things out of places far enough distant from their source. Without pains and without learning, having a thousand volumes about me in the place where I write, I can presently borrow, if I please, from a dozen such scrap-gatherers, people about whom I do not much trouble myself, wherewith to trick up this treatise of Physiognomy; there needs no more but a preliminary epistle of a German to stuff me with quotations. And so it is we go in quest of a tickling story to cheat the foolish world. These lumber pies of common-places, wherewith so many furnish their studies, are of little use but to common subjects, and serve but to show us, and not to direct us: a ridiculous fruit of learning, that Socrates so pleasantly discusses against Euthydemus. I have seen books made of things that were never either studied or understood; the author committing to several of his learned friends the examination of this and t'other matter to compile it, contenting himself, for his share, with having projected the design, and by his industry to have tied together this fagot of unknown provisions; the ink and paper, at least, are his. This is to buy or borrow a book, and not to make one; 'tis to show men not that he can make a book, but that, whereof they may be in doubt, he cannot make one. A president, where I was, boasted that he had amassed together two hundred and odd common-places in one of his

judgments; in telling which, he deprived himself of the glory he had got by it: in my opinion, a pusillanimous and absurd vanity for such a subject and such a person. I do the contrary; and amongst so many borrowed things, am glad if I can steal one, disguising and altering it for some new service; at the hazard of having it said that 'tis for want of understanding its natural use; I give it some particular touch of my own hand, to the end it may not be so absolutely foreign. These set their thefts in show, and value them in show, and value themselves upon them, and so have more credit with the laws than I; we naturalists think that there is a great and incomparable preference in the honor of invention over that of allegation.

If I would have spoken by knowledge, I had spoken sooner; I had written of the time nearer to my studies, when I had more wit and better memory, and should sooner have trusted to the vigor of that age than of this, would I have made a business of writing. And what if this gracious favor which Fortune has lately offered me upon the account of this work, had befallen me in that time of my life, instead of this, wherein 'tis equally desirable to possess, soon to be lost! Two of my acquaintance, great men in this faculty, have, in my opinion, lost half, in refusing to publish at forty years old, that they might stay till threescore. Maturity has its defects as well as green years, and worse; and old age is as unfit for this kind of business as for any other. He who commits his decrepitude to the press plays the fool if he think to squeeze anything out thence that does not relish of dreaming, dotage, and driveling; the mind grows costive and thick in growing old. I deliver my ignorance in pomp and state, and my learning meagrely and poorly; this accidentally and accessorily, that principally and expressly; and write specifically of nothing but nothing, nor of any science but of that inscience. I have chosen a time when my life, which I am to give an account of, lies wholly before me; what remains has more to do with death; and of my death itself, should I find it a prating death, as others do, I would willingly give an account at my departure.

Socrates was a perfect exemplar in all great qualities, and I am vexed that he had so deformed a face and body as is said, and so unsuitable to the beauty of his soul, himself being so amorous and such an admirer of beauty: Nature did him wrong. There is nothing more probable than the conformity and relation of the body to the soul:—

> *"It is of great consequence in what bodies minds are placed, for many things spring from the body that may sharpen the mind, and*

many that may blunt it;"

this refers to an unnatural ugliness and deformity of limbs; but we call ugliness also an unseemliness at first sight, which is principally lodged in the face, and disgusts us on very slight grounds: by the complexion, a spot, a rugged countenance, for some reasons often wholly inexplicable, in members nevertheless of good symmetry and perfect. The deformity, that clothed a very beautiful soul in La Boetie, was of this predicament: that superficial ugliness, which nevertheless is always the most imperious, is of least prejudice to the state of the mind, and of little certainty in the opinion of men. The other, which is never properly called deformity, being more substantial, strikes deeper in. Not every shoe of smooth shining leather, but every shoe well-made, shows the shape of the foot within. As Socrates said of his, it betrayed equal ugliness in his soul, had he not corrected it by education; but in saying so, I hold he was in jest, as his custom was; never so excellent a soul formed itself.

I cannot often enough repeat how great an esteem I have for beauty, that potent and advantageous quality; he (La Boetie) called it "a short tyranny," and Plato, "the privilege of nature." We have nothing that excels it in reputation; it has the first place in the commerce of men; it presents itself in the front; seduces and prepossesses our judgments with great authority and wonderful impression. Phryne had lost her cause in the hands of an excellent advocate, if, opening her robe, she had not corrupted her judges by the lustre of her beauty. And I find that Cyrus, Alexander, and Caesar, the three masters of the world, never neglected beauty in their greatest affairs; no more did the first Scipio. The same word in Greek signifies both fair and good; and the Holy Word often says good when it means fair: I should willingly maintain the priority in good things, according to the song that Plato calls an idle thing, taken out of some ancient poet: "health, beauty, riches." Aristotle says that the right of command appertains to the beautiful; and that, when there is a person whose beauty comes near the images of the gods, veneration is equally due to him. To him who asked why people oftener and longer frequent the company of handsome persons: "That question," said he, "is only to be asked by the blind." Most of the philosophers, and the greatest, paid for their schooling, and acquired wisdom by the favor and mediation of their beauty. Not only in the men that serve me, but also in the beasts, I consider it within two fingers' breadth of goodness.

The Poet's Dream. From painting by Jean Leon Gerome.

And yet I fancy that those features and moulds of face, and those lineaments, by which men guess at our internal complexions and our fortunes to come, is a thing that does not very directly and simply lie under the chapter of beauty and deformity, no more than every good odor and serenity of air promises health, nor all fog and stink infection in a time of pestilence. Such as accuse ladies of contradicting their beauty by their manners, do not always hit right; for, in a face which is none of the best, there may dwell some air of probity and trust; as, on the contrary, I have read, betwixt two beautiful eyes, menaces of a dangerous and malignant nature. There are favorable physiognomies, so that in a crowd of victorious enemies, you shall presently choose, amongst men you never saw before, one rather than another to whom to surrender, and with whom to intrust your life; and yet not properly upon the consideration of beauty.

A person’s look is but a feeble warranty; and yet it is something considerable too; and if I had to lash them, I would most severely scourge the wicked ones who belie and betray the promises that nature has planted in their foreheads; I should with greater severity punish malice under a mild and gentle aspect. It seems as if there were some lucky and some unlucky faces; and I believe there is some art in distinguishing affable from merely simple faces, severe from rugged, malicious from pensive, scornful from melancholic, and such other bordering qualities. There are beauties which are not only haughty, but sour, and others that are not only gentle, but more than that, insipid; to prognosticate from them future events is a matter that I shall leave undecided.

I have, as I have said elsewhere as to my own concern, simply and implicitly embraced this ancient rule, “That we cannot fail in following Nature,” and that the sovereign precept is to conform ourselves to her. I have not, as Socrates did, corrected my natural composition by the force of reason, and have not in the least disturbed my inclination by art; I have let myself go as I came: I contend not; my two principal parts live, of their own accord, in peace and good intelligence, but my nurse’s milk, thank God, was tolerably wholesome and good. Shall I say this by the way, that I see in greater esteem than ’tis worth, and in use solely among ourselves, a certain image of scholastic probity, a slave to precepts, and fettered with hope and fear? I would have it such as that laws and religions should not make, but perfect and authorize it; that finds it has wherewithal to support itself without help, born and rooted in us from the seed of universal reason, imprinted in every man by nature. That reason which strengthens Socrates from his vicious bend renders him obedient to the gods and men of authority in his city: courageous in death, not because his soul is immortal, but because he is mortal. ’Tis a doctrine ruinous to all government, and much more hurtful than ingenious and subtle, which persuades the people that a religious belief is alone sufficient, and without conduct, to satisfy the divine justice. Use demonstrates to us a vast distinction betwixt devotion and conscience.

I have a favorable aspect, both in form and in interpretation:—

“What did I say? that I have? no, Chremes, I had.”

“Alas! of a worn body thou seest only the bones;”

and that makes a quite contrary show to that of Socrates. It has often befallen me, that upon the mere credit of my presence and air, persons who had no manner of knowledge of me have put a very great confidence in me, whether in their own affairs or mine; and I have in foreign parts thence obtained singular and rare favors. But the two following examples are, peradventure, worth particular relation. A certain person planned to surprise my house and me in it; his scheme was to come to my gates alone, and to be importunate to be let in. I knew him by name, and had fair reason to repose confidence in him, as being my neighbor and something related to me. I caused the gates to be opened to him, as I do to every one. There I found him, with every appearance of alarm, his horse panting and very tired. He entertained me with this story: “That, about half a league off, he had met with a certain enemy of his, whom I also knew, and had heard of their

quarrel; that his enemy had given him a very brisk chase, and that having been surprised in disorder, and his party being too weak, he had fled to my gates for refuge; and that he was in great trouble for his followers, whom (he said) he concluded to be all either dead or taken." I innocently did my best to comfort, assure, and refresh him. Shortly after came four or five of his soldiers, who presented themselves in the same countenance and affright, to get in too; and after them more, and still more, very well mounted and armed, to the number of five-and-twenty or thirty, pretending that they had the enemy at their heels. This mystery began a little to awaken my suspicion; I was not ignorant what an age I lived in, how much my house might be envied, and I had several examples of others of my acquaintance to whom a mishap of this sort had happened. But thinking there was nothing to be got by having begun to do a courtesy, unless I went through with it, and that I could not disengage myself from them without spoiling all, I let myself go the most natural and simple way, as I always do, and invited them all to come in. And in truth I am naturally very little inclined to suspicion and distrust; I willingly incline towards excuse and the gentlest interpretation; I take men according to the common order, and do not more believe in those perverse and unnatural inclinations, unless convinced by manifest evidence, than I do in monsters and miracles; and I am, moreover, a man who willingly commit myself to Fortune, and throw myself headlong into her arms; and I have hitherto found more reason to applaud than to blame myself for so doing, having ever found her more discreet about, and a greater friend to my affairs, than I am myself. There are some actions in my life whereof the conduct may justly be called difficult, or, if you please, prudent; of these, supposing the third part to have been my own, doubtless the other two-thirds were absolutely hers. We make, methinks, a mistake in that we do not enough trust Heaven with our affairs, and pretend to more from our own conduct than appertains to us; and therefore it is that our designs so often miscarry. Heaven is jealous of the extent that we attribute to the right of human prudence above its own, and cuts it all the shorter by how much the more we amplify it. The last comers remained on horseback in my courtyard, whilst their leader, who was with me in the parlor, would not have his horse put up in the stable, saying he should immediately retire, so soon as he had news of his men. He saw himself master of his enterprise, and nothing now remained but its execution. He has since several times said (for he was not ashamed to tell

the story himself) that my countenance and frankness had snatched the treachery out of his hands. He again mounted his horse; his followers, who had their eyes intent upon him, to see when he would give the signal, being very much astonished to find him come away and leave his prey behind him.

Another time, relying upon some truce just published in the army, I took a journey through a very ticklish country. I had not ridden far, but I was discovered, and two or three parties of horse, from various places, were sent out to seize me; one of them overtook me on the third day, and I was attacked by fifteen or twenty gentlemen in vizors, followed at a distance by a band of foot-soldiers. I was taken, withdrawn into the thick of a neighboring forest, dismounted, robbed, my trunks rifled, my money-box taken, and my horses and equipage divided amongst new masters. We had, in this copse, a very long contest about my ransom, which they set so high, that it was manifest I was not known to them. They were, moreover, in a very great debate about my life; and, in truth, there were various circumstances that clearly showed the danger I was in:—

"Then, Aeneas, there is need of courage, of a firm heart."

I still insisted upon the truce, too willing they should have the gain of what they had already taken from me, which was not to be despised, without promise of any other ransom. After two or three hours that we had been in this place, and that they had mounted me upon a horse that was not likely to run from them, and committed me to the guard of fifteen or twenty harquebusiers, and dispersed my servants to others, having given order that they should carry us away prisoners several ways, and I being already got some two or three musket-shots from the place:—

"By a prayer addressed now to Pollux, now to Castor,"

behold a sudden and unexpected alteration; I saw the chief return to me with gentler language, making search amongst the troopers for my scattered property, and causing as much as could be recovered to be restored to me, even to my money-box; but the best present they made me was my liberty, for the rest did not much concern me at that time. The true cause of so sudden a change, and of this reconsideration, without any apparent impulse, and of so miraculous a repentance, in such a time, in a planned and deliberate enterprise, and become just by usage (for, at the first dash, I plainly confessed to them of what party I was, and whither I was going), truly, I do not yet rightly understand. The most prominent amongst

them, who pulled off his vizor and told me his name, repeatedly told me at the time, over and over again, that I owed my deliverance to my countenance, and the liberty and boldness of my speech, that rendered me unworthy of such a misadventure, and should secure me from its repetition. 'Tis possible that the Divine goodness willed to make use of this vain instrument for my preservation; and it, moreover, defended me the next day from other and worse ambushes, of which these my assailants had given me warning. The last of these two gentlemen is yet living himself to tell the story; the first was killed not long ago.

If my face did not answer for me, if men did not read in my eyes and in my voice the innocence of my intention, I had not lived so long without quarrels and without giving offence, seeing the indiscreet liberty I take to say, right or wrong, whatever comes into my head, and to judge so rashly of things. This way may, with reason, appear uncivil, and ill adapted to our way of conversation; but I have never met with any who judged it outrageous or malicious, or that took offence at my liberty, if he had it from my own mouth; words repeated have another kind of sound and sense. Nor do I hate any person; and I am so slow to offend, that I cannot do it, even upon the account of reason itself; and when occasion has required me to sentence criminals, I have rather chosen to fail in point of justice than to do it:—

> *"So that I had rather men should not commit faults than that I should have sufficient courage to condemn them."*

Aristotle, 'tis said, was reproached for having been too merciful to a wicked man: "I was indeed," said he, "merciful to the man, but not to his wickedness." Ordinary judgments exasperate themselves to punishment by the horror of the fact: but it cools mine; the horror of the first murder makes me fear a second; and the deformity of the first cruelty makes me abhor all imitation of it. That may be applied to me, who am but a Squire of Clubs, which was said of Charillus, king of Sparta: "He cannot be good, seeing he is not evil even to the wicked." Or thus—for Plutarch delivers it both these ways, as he does a thousand other things, variously and contradictorily —"He must needs be good, because he is so even to the wicked." Even as in lawful actions I dislike to employ myself when for such as are displeased at it; so, to say the truth, in unlawful things I do not make conscience enough of employing myself when it is for such as are willing.

Table of Contents

Cover
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS
ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE
OF VANITY
OF MANAGING ONE'S WILL
OF CRIPPLES
ON PHYSIOGNOMY